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Perceptions From School Principals About The Role Of Schools In Developing Student Leadership

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PERCEPTIONS FROM SCHOOL PRINCIPALS ABOUT THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS IN DEVELOPING STUDENT LEADERSHIP

By

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A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctorate in Education

Hamline University

St. Paul, Minnesota

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ABSTRACT

Student leadership within the elementary school is a newer concept and has not been researched or implemented widely. However, there are some elementary schools that have been developing student leadership. This research focused on gathering the perceptions of elementary school principals toward the role of the school in developing student leadership. This qualitative research followed a grounded theory process. Data collection methods involved gathering data from an online survey, elite interviews, and field observations, which allowed a triangulation of data and findings. Participants from a midwestern metro area were selected for this research based on an online search for schools with terms and phrases related to social emotional learning and student leadership written in the school description, mission, or vision. There were nine school principals who completed the online survey, two principals who participated in elite interviews, and two school sites that participated in the field observations. Findings suggested that several roles and values were important for implementing and sustaining student leadership. Schools developed student leadership when principals aligned resources and provided positive communication, staff and students connected within the community and developed moral identities, and students developed leadership through real-world experiences. Areas for future research include a study on the specific values and beliefs of principals in schools developing student leadership, the specific framework for implementing student leadership and what student leadership opportunities exist in schools, and the impact of student leadership on future ethical leadership.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated...

With all my heart to my family,

With all my hopes for bright futures to the children,

With much respect to the teachers,

And with much admiration and intention to the principals.

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My journey at Hamline brought so many wonderful people into my life. I am thankful for the help, support, and encouragement of so many.

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LIST OF FIGURES, CHARTS, AND TABLES

Figure 3.1: Visual Representation of My Grounded Theory	63, 92
Figure 4.1: Data Analysis Stages	94
Figure 5.1: The Interconnected Components of Developing Student Leadership	174
Chart 4.1: Reported Use of Social Emotional Learning Programs	98
Chart 4.2: Students vs. Teachers in Learning SEL Components	99-100
Chart 4.3: Students vs. Teachers Learning Leadership Skills	101-102
Chart 4.4: Rating of Effective Establishment	104
Chart 4.5: Rating of Effective Implementation Plan	105
Chart 4.6: Rating of Effective Professional Development	106
Chart 4.7: Rating of Effective School-Wide Policies	107
Chart 4.8: Rating of Effective Data Usage to Guide	108
Chart 4.9: Importance vs. Frequency of Student Experience of Outcomes	110
Chart 4.10: Importance vs. Frequency of Teachers Using SEL and Leadership Strategies	112
Table 4.1: Categories of School's Role in Developing Leadership in Students	113-114
Table 4.2: Categories of School Practices	115-116
Table 4.3: Categories from Elite Interviews	146-148
Table 4.4: Categories from Observations	152-153
Table 4.5: Combined Categories Per Research Questions	155
Table 4.6: Labeled Categories Per Research Questions	157
Table 4.7: Labeled Categories with Number of Occurrences Per Question	160

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
DEDICATION	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF FIGURES, CHARTS, AND TABLES	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	viii
CHAPTER ONE	1
Introduction	1
Reflection on the Impact of Leadership	2
Learning to Lead - Personal Journey	4
Learning to Lead with Authentic Purpose	5
Description of Research Topic and Questions	6
Significance of This Research	9
Limitations to this Research	13
Summary	14
CHAPTER TWO	16
Overview of Chapter Sections	16
The Purpose of School	17
The Role of the Principal	24
Instructional Leadership	26
School Climate and Culture	28
Communication and Collaboration	30
Social Emotional Learning and Leadership in an Era of Accountability	32
Beyond Academic Learning	33
Purpose of Social Emotional Learning	38
Leadership in a Learning Organization	42
Teaching Students to Learn and Lead in a Learning Organization	50
Summary	56
CHAPTER 3	60
Explanation of Research Method	61
Setting and Participants	68
The Survey and Survey Participants	69

Elite Interviews	80
Field Observations	86
Summary	88
CHAPTER 4	91
Overview of Research and Organization of Findings	91
Analysis and Summary of Survey Findings	95
Responses and Descriptions of Data Analysis by Question	96
Using the Survey Findings to Select Participants for Interviews and Observations	116
Significant Survey Response Differences	118
Analysis and Summary of Elite Interview Findings	129
The Selected Elite Interviewees	130
Descriptions of Elite Interview Settings and Interviewee Behavior	131
Description of Coding and Categorizing of Interviews	133
Categories and Excerpts from Elite Interviews	135
Analysis and Summary of Field Observations	148
The Observation Sites and Observation Parameters	149
Description of Coding and Categorizing of Observations	151
Summary of Theoretical Sampling	153
Description of Saturation and Sorting of Categories	153
Resulting Themes	159
Constructed Grounded Theory	162
Summary	163
CHAPTER 5	166
Summary of Insights	166
The Principal: Align Resources and Provide Positive Communication	168
The Staff and Students: Connect within the Community and Develop Moral Identities	170
The Students: Develop Leadership Through Real-World Experiences	172
Implications for Future Research	174
Limitations of This Research	177
Final Reflections	178
APPENDIX A: EMAIL NOTIFICATION OF ONLINE SURVEY	182
APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY	183
APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT	194

APPENDIX D: ELITE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

196

REFERENCES

197

CHAPTER ONE

“Each of us guards a gate of change that can be opened only from the inside.”

-Stephen Covey

Introduction

Over the last several years, I have discovered much about my beliefs about education and my understanding of how leadership impacts education. I had always been aware of the influence that leadership had on individuals and groups because of my early years of personal exposure within my family but the last several years of working as an elementary school principal brought out a question of how much impact leadership could have on the school community and ultimately on the education of elementary children. In fact, I embraced a belief and practice that shifted some leadership on to students. This shift of leadership is not just about sharing leadership, rather it is a shift into developing leadership skills in elementary students. The 21st century requires individuals to work within diverse teams and use leadership skills to guide their own behaviors and to navigate relationships with others. In order to build sustained life-long leadership qualities in our future society, we need to start teaching leadership skills to elementary school students.

As I engaged in conversations with other elementary school principals around student leadership, many principals agreed with me that we needed to develop leadership in students. Yet, few principals were willing to lead the school towards developing leadership in students. I thought perhaps this was due to the fact that elementary school principals and teachers needed the skills to lead such an effort. However, I wondered whether the beliefs around student leadership among elementary principals were the bigger influences of how much the school

could contribute in developing leadership in students. This questioning forms the basis of my reflection on the personal impact of leadership from my childhood years into adulthood and my current professional role. My primary research question is *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in developing leadership in students?* I am interested in finding out reasons and beliefs underlying the decision of principals to implement school-wide student leadership programs. The school-wide student leadership programs could be packaged programs or frameworks or they could be a locally developed student leadership culture within the school. In finding answers to my primary question, I hope to be able to also answer my secondary questions *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?.*

Reflection on the Impact of Leadership

My leadership journey was impacted by many significant people, places, and events, which added to my view on leadership. These significant influences can be considered both positive and negative. I've reflected on these influences and it has helped me shape my leadership style as well as my beliefs, values, and theories about leadership. Just as Northouse (2013) describes how theory can transform the practice of leadership, I also believe that the trial and errors of leadership practice can inform beliefs and theories. The leadership journey can be complex and must begin with knowing one's past influences and present motivations.

My life began with fear and leadership was seen as dangerous. I was born during a time of crisis and in an environment developed out of need. It was 1974 and the Vietnam War was supposed to be at an end but when the United States pulled out of the Vietnam War, my family was caught in the aftermath of persecutions to come from the communist Vietnamese and

Laotians as a penalty for helping the United States. My whole ethnicity of being Hmong was no longer accepted. My mother nearly escaped the village raid with my older brother strapped on her back, taking a bullet in her right buttock. Even though she refuses to talk about that moment today, I know it must have been a frightening experience. My early years were filled with split-second decision making models and plenty of strife. My mother remained my constant model of strength, courage, and servant leadership as she cared for many of the elderly in my father's large extended family. My father was revered as a Hmong clan leader for all of his Vang clan family members. My roots were grounded in the blood-soaked, poverty-stricken soil in Laos but the stronghold of my family was destined to carry us across the Mekong River into the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp and then to the United States, where I could see potential in my parents for a more peaceful future and an idea of leadership beyond war.

Knowing my past and remaining grateful for my present situation has always helped me appreciate my experiences. My mother's promotion of service to others was the reminder to me to lead a good life, even in times when so many Hmong youth were joining gangs and marrying young in the 1980s. From an early age of 8, I watched my father as elder leader resolve conflict between many married couples and among family members. Since my mother worked the second shift, I took on my mother's responsibilities of service during the evening mediation sessions. This gave me a unique experience of listening in and observing my father's eloquence, strategies, techniques and leadership style. Since women were not usually invited to these mediation sessions even to observe, I was often given a lot of attention as a follower of my father. With my mother, I learned the value of service for others and from my father, I learned the value of listening to understand.

Learning to Lead - Personal Journey

As a young adult, I never called myself a leader and I never actively sought after a leadership role. Part of this was because of my quiet personality and part of this was because of my upbringing to only speak after thinking. I learned early on that listening and observing was the best way to be of service and understanding was the best way to be a leader. Growing up, I believed that leaders had followers and leaders tended to be social, extroverted, and full of charisma. I did not see myself as having any of those qualities so I did not see how I could ever be a leader. My high expectation for integrity compelled me to want to live according to my values and beliefs but I did not feel it was my duty to transform others to be like me. My wish was for people to transform themselves for the better based on their own motivation. It was slower change and transformation this way but it was more authentic.

When reflecting on when I actually was aware of being a leader, I thought back to my experience of being asked to be the president of the Asian Cultures Club in high school. Even though I did not see myself as a leader then, I was asked to lead others in a group that was a new challenge for me as a sixteen year old. I now see that I was chosen as a leader at that time and others must have seen potential in me that I was not seeing for myself. It does make the leadership journey more meaningful when others see me as a leader without my own proclamation that I am a leader. Through trials and errors of leadership practice, I have been able to shift my belief about leaders and leadership. Now, I see that leadership is about inspiring others to act upon their beliefs. Good leaders can help set a pace and vision but the decision to follow or lead further should be voluntary. This is one of the best ways to ensure authenticity in leading and following.

Learning to lead is a life-long process that involves complex changes and discoveries. As I discover more about myself and gain further knowledge and realizations of what leadership could be, my definition and expectation of leadership will continue to evolve. I have become more focused on leading in order to benefit others. Northouse (2013) would describe this leadership approach as servant leadership, in which the leader is more concerned about the social responsibility to help the less privileged and to shift leadership ability to those who are being led. I see this ongoing transformation towards building community and empowering teachers and students as an essential transformation for educational leaders. My current perspective of educational leadership involves not only inspiring people into action but also to lead their own actions to do the right things that will benefit others. Doing this involves being able to inspire, to build community, and to foster collaboration between leaders and followers so that patterns of leadership behavior are grounded in positive psychological qualities and strong ethics, thereby reflecting authentic leadership (Northouse, 2013).

Learning to Lead with Authentic Purpose

From an early age, I have been drawn to support in the areas of need. Whether it was volunteering to help build a home for a low-income family or to organize learning sessions for Hmong women, my most desired outcomes have been centered on making the lives of others better. There are many elementary students who go through elementary school passively, as I once did. I see that the biggest need now is to make the elementary years more meaningful for students by helping them develop skills that will help them through their years in middle school, high school, college, career and adulthood. Now, not only does the education of children matter to me, but the potential impact of decisions from school leaders is something that is of utmost importance in determining the quality of education of children. As a school leader with passion

to improve the education of children for a lasting positive impact, I consider myself “not [a] leader as special person but leader as a citizen willing to do those things that have the capacity to initiate something new in the world” (Block, 2009, p. 86). In the past few years as a new principal, I have been working to create owners within the school community. I have empowered teachers to become leaders within the school and created space and time for teachers to design and analyze systems and data for student learning. This intentional empowerment of teacher leaders has increased the ownership of teachers within the community, which I believe leads to a stronger community (Block, 2009).

Authentic leaders are those who lead with their hearts and give purpose to others while remaining balanced and committed to core values. As a lifelong developmental process, authentic leadership can be formed and informed through various experiences (Northouse, 2013). I believe school leaders can have impact on the learning of teachers and students. Hence, it is essential for all those within the school and school system to feel respected and valued for being part of the system and to have purpose. One of the most challenging missions of being an authentic leader is to lead with passion, respect, and clarity while fostering inspirations. I hope to be able to share and exchange the purpose, values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart as described in Bill George’s Authentic Leadership Approach (Northouse, 2013). As my professional duty is to provide clear vision and focus, my hope is to inspire others to do the right thing.

Description of Research Topic and Questions

The concept of student leadership has not been explored enough. Even with the recent attention on social emotional learning, the focus has mostly been on implementing programs that develop social emotional skills in students. CASEL (2012) has gathered information and

evaluations on eighty different social emotional learning programs and produced a guide describing twenty three social emotional learning programs and their effectiveness. *Responsive Classroom*, which focuses on community building and caring environments, is an example of a widely-used social emotional learning program used to develop social emotional skills in elementary schools (CASEL, 2012; Education Week Research Center, 2015). However, there are very few programs that focus on developing student leadership in the schools.

With a strong belief that students deserve to be taught the life-long skills and given the opportunities to reach towards their potential, I whole-heartedly believe that my purpose in education is not only to ensure students learn academically, but to also develop leadership skills such as responsibility, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. These are all essential for ensuring that students leave the elementary school prepared to succeed through middle school, high school, college, and career. Developing leadership in students goes beyond the typical social emotional learning programs. This effort requires a strong commitment and investment of time, belief, and support from staff, parents, and community. The success of student leadership within schools becomes dependent on the connection between the level of school support for student leadership and the level of underlying belief from the staff and principal. My hope is to uncover more information about this connection.

Education is considered one of the human rights we have, but we all know that not every child receives this right throughout the world. In 2014, the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2016) found that 263 million primary to secondary-age children in the world were not in school because of persistent marginalization and lack of access. Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) defines the purpose of education as “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights

and fundamental freedoms.” Although the term “human personality” can mean many different things to many different people, the underlying necessity in this statement is that education needs to go beyond academics. Education should also include development of social skills, emotional health, talents, collaboration, communication, and many other skills that are normally labeled non-academic. With the notion of education serving a larger purpose of developing human personalities, it seems like an obvious reason for schools to build leadership in students. Yet, student leadership within schools is an uncommon practice.

After further reading and reviews of literature related to student leadership and schools that have student leadership programs, I began to turn my focus to looking at the type of leadership of principals and how they see the role of school in developing leadership skills in students. Principals who saw themselves as instructional leaders and could effectively lead curriculum and instruction as well as learners and could learn alongside teachers were more effective at gaining the trust of teachers and deeper implementation of initiatives by teachers (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012). Seeing student leadership as an initiative, I wanted to discover more about the factors influencing the level of success of student leadership in schools, particularly at the school leadership layer. My primary research question is *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in developing leadership in students?* My secondary research question is *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?* Other questions that I want to address are *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

My secondary research questions are derived from my primary question through clarification and inquiry. My hope is that by answering the primary question, I will also obtain

answers to my secondary questions that include definitions, beliefs, practices, and implications of student leadership. This information will provide explanations and details of how school principals describe the role of schools in developing student leadership.

As an elementary school principal, I was compelled to create the school culture and climate that would value the voice of students and provide students with ample opportunities to participate in leadership. When I began my work as a principal in 2013, I was surprised and frustrated by the amount of attention and resources placed only on academic curriculum and achievement. I realized the vast inequities in focusing solely on academics. Yet, there was more that needed to change than just focusing more attention onto building social emotional skills. There was a need to build life skills in students early on so that they would possess the life skills to lead themselves and others to be successful. My hope was to find the appropriate pedagogical methods and the perfect student leadership program to bring into the school. However, ultimately I wondered if any pre-packaged leadership program or recommended set of pedagogical methods would have a sustainable and long-lasting impact on students after they left my school. I decided to focus on the one level of leadership within a school that would determine how well student leadership programs would be implemented and monitored for success. The focus needed to be on school principals and their perceptions of what would make student leadership programs successful.

Significance of This Research

There are two main reasons for my interest in learning more about how principals describe the school's role in developing student leadership. The first reason is that I hold the belief that education of students involves more than academics. We need to consider building the skills in students that will help them become successful in the future. The future of our

students depends on how prepared they will be to succeed through college and career. More importantly, the future of our society depends on how well we prepare students to become productive and positive citizens.

As originally stated in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1949), humans have the right to education and education involves developing the human personality beyond reading, math, and science. Education that is directed at developing the full human personality and can strengthen respect for human rights and freedom means education that develops the autonomy of the individual students to be productive and positive contributors and participants who can regulate and reciprocate respect and freedom (Piaget, 1973). Students who are taught leadership skills and provided the opportunities to learn and lead would be closer to the full development of human personality. Education systems and school leaders who build leadership in students would be providing the human “right to find in these schools all that is necessary to the building of a questioning mind and a dynamic moral conscience” (Piaget, 1973, p.92). From this notion of developing a questioning mind and a moral conscience, we can have hope that students will have the right mindset going into the future that will benefit all of us.

Student achievement has always been a major focus of education and since the signing of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2002, student achievement has gained even more scrutiny through more standardized assessments, more emphasis on reading and math, and more measures of school performance. As much as NCLB created accountability, school curriculum became narrower in content and standardized testing areas such as reading, math, and science became the main areas of curricular focus. The reduction of school curriculum to test prep and the system of punishing schools with low achievement scores set up an inequitable system in which students of color and students in poverty were the most deprived of quality education (Darling-Hammond,

2010). Taking this view of educational inequity into focus along with the fact that students of color and students in poverty are less likely to go to college or have successful careers, we should all be concerned about developing future leaders who are proportionally representative of our future society.

Using and building a growth mindset in students is necessary for promoting student success through effort, learning from failure, reflection, and growth (Dweck, 2006). This theory of personal success has become a widely accepted theory throughout education and further research in expanding upon the growth mindset to particular characteristics such as grit, perseverance, curiosity, and conscientiousness, have been continued by many researchers. Tough (2012) presents that children who develop these characteristics are more likely to succeed because these characteristics are more predictive of success than academic achievement scores or IQ tests. This led me to wonder how we could build up character in students that would not only help them become successful as students and future workers in society but also as ethical leaders.

The second reason I am interested in this topic is that I believe the school principal has a major influence on the overall culture and climate of a school. Effective principals are aware of the relationships among staff and work to build healthy interpersonal relationships with staff and students (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982) . Part of creating positive school culture and climate is also being able to build community so that students, parents, teachers, and support staff can all feel a sense of belonging within the community. Block (2008) explains that the best way to build community is to create a community in which each member feels like an owner of the community. As principals become more aware of the relationships among staff and more capable of creating community, they will be able to lead the development of a shared vision and

gain support from staff to work towards the priorities that are focused on the mission and vision of the school (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982).

In observations and literature reviews, much of the research has focused on the impact of student leadership programs on students through school climate surveys and analysis of student achievement data. Although student achievement and school climate are both important indicators of effective systems, the level of implementation of student leadership programs are most influenced by the beliefs and perceptions held by the school principal. My desire for researching the beliefs and perceptions of school principals in schools with student leadership programs is to determine what those beliefs are and how those beliefs shape the school-wide practices that are in place to support student leadership.

School principals are faced with making decisions often and have to decide what, when, and how decisions are made. Organizational leadership theories describe the need for school principals to develop school culture and climate through shared leadership and vision, creating an effective living system (Senge, 2006). In order for school principals to create school culture and climate that reflects their visions and beliefs, they need to be able to articulate their beliefs and portray the behaviors they want to see. School principals who can transform the cultures within their schools into sustainable communities that embrace student leadership must do so with engagement from staff and students. This transformation of members into owners in the school community will ensure teamwork, communication, and growth (Block, 2008).

Through my research in this area, I hope to apply the knowledge that I discover to my school and the district community. I want to provide an explanation for why student leadership programs are needed, what beliefs and perceptions must school principals hold, and how can this knowledge help other school principals and their schools. With this in mind, my work reflects

the scholarship of application and scholarship of engagement as described by Boyer (1996). My hope is that what I research will be applicable to schools and school leaders who are either questioning how to implement changes or how to strengthen and anchor their own leadership towards student leadership. This research is also an example of the scholarship of engagement because this topic is a current reflection of the need to improve our future society with strong ethical leaders.

Limitations to this Research

Although there has been research on the leadership of schools, mainly focused on the principal's role, research on schools that are developing leadership in students is limited. In fact, the concept of developing leadership in elementary students has not been a well-researched area. This caused a limitation on the research that I could find for the literature review. I decided to focus my literature review on the things that have affected the purpose of schools, the role of the principal, and the current need for social emotional learning and leadership in schools.

In my current role as an elementary school principal, I have searched for various social emotional learning programs and student leadership programs. Although many social emotional learning programs focus on character development and community building, very few emphasize student leadership the way *The Leader in Me* does with a school-wide approach towards building leadership in students, parents, and staff. *The Leader in Me* is a leadership framework that was developed by an elementary school principal and leaders of Franklin Covey, using the seven habits of highly effective people introduced by Covey (2004). *The Leader in Me* is used in over two thousand schools worldwide and over two hundred schools in the United States and has transformed many schools based on the explicit teaching of the seven habits to help students and staff lead themselves and others (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014; Education Direction,

2015; Steinberg & Li, 2014). These seven habits are expected to guide the personal self and interactions with others: 1) Be proactive, 2) Begin with the end in mind, 3) Put first things first, 4) Think win-win, 5) Seek first to understand, then to be understood, 6) Synergize, and 7) Sharpen the Saw (Covey, 2004). My research may not intensively involve any schools implementing *The Leader in Me*, but the various student leadership programs in the schools I include in my research will hopefully have a common outcome of developing leadership behaviors in students. My hope is that my research on the beliefs and perceptions of the school leaders will provide more information on how these beliefs and perceptions inform practice and guide implementation.

Summary

My primary and secondary research questions require gathering data regarding principals' perceptions of student leadership, from the perspectives of what is the school's role in student leadership and what beliefs school principals hold about student leadership. In order to address both of my research questions further, I needed to probe into the systems and practices of particular elementary schools with student leadership cultures. In Chapter Two, I present the pertinent literature related to the role of the school principal, the purpose of school, and the impact of student leadership. There were many intersections between what the school culture and climate looks and feels like and what the role of the school principal looks and feels like in schools with high student leadership. In Chapter Three, I describe my research methods in further detail. My research was conducted using a qualitative research framework, in which I used primarily qualitative approaches in gathering, analyzing, and summarizing data. I began my research with gathering survey data. The analysis of the survey data results informed the quality of questions for interviews and observations and provided a more thorough and enriched

understanding towards my research questions. Through gathering data on people and phenomena in natural settings and occurrence, a qualitative research paradigm will allow exploration with a variety of methods (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In Chapter Four, I share the findings of this research and how the theory was extrapolated through the data, analysis, and interpretation of data. In Chapter Five, I share my reflections on the findings as I compare the data I gathered to my discoveries within the literature review. I also discuss limitations and implications for further research. My dissertation ends with my final thoughts about the findings and how this research can impact the beliefs and practices of more elementary school principals.

CHAPTER TWO

*“Leadership is communicating others’ worth and potential so clearly
that they are inspired to see it in themselves.” - Stephen Covey*

Overview of Chapter Sections

In the search for primary studies and answers to my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, I realized that little has been researched directly in this area. Many student leadership programs focused on building leadership skills in high school and college students. There has not been much study of student leadership at the elementary school level except in schools with *The Leader in Me* (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014), a framework for developing school-wide leadership within students and staff. Through careful analysis of what my primary question was trying to decipher from the complex and multi-faceted world of elementary principalship and leadership, my literature review is focused on three aspects: The purpose of school, the role of the principal, and the impact of leadership in students. By focusing on each of these areas, I hope to uncover further information and insights about why leadership in students is important and address my premonitions regarding my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

In the chapter’s section The Purpose of School, I present information and studies that set the underlying foundation for what is expected of schools in historical and current contexts. I also describe the changes in the purpose of schools and the consistent drive of schools to reach higher academic proficiency. In The Role of the Principal section, I present information on how the role of the principal has changed. I also share how the principal is involved in instructional

leadership, school climate and culture, and communication and collaboration. In the last section of the literature review, Social Emotional Learning in an Era of Accountability, I present information and insights on social emotional learning, leadership in a learning organization, and teaching students to learn and lead in a learning organization.

The Purpose of School

Our students today will be our future tomorrow. If we only focus on our current societal needs, we will consistently be trailing behind in the future and trying to catch up. This section provides background information that will be important to keep in mind towards my primary question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*. Schools are constantly changing entities because societal needs are constantly changing as well. Changes in education and its effect on social changes are interwoven as various facets of society pushed and pulled throughout historical eras (Rury, 2013). Schools should be responsive to the needs of current students in order to ensure success of each student (Blankstein, 2010). Educators, educational institutions, and learners are responsible to themselves as well as the whole society in which they belong (Block, 2008). Effective principals with a high sense of situational awareness would know to be responsive to the constant changes within the school and society (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). Each of us needs to realize our individual impact on the present and future as well as the impact we could make as part of a team (Senge, 2006). Educators need to see themselves as the motivators and supporters of students to reach higher learning levels and instill hard work ethics so that our future can be prosperous. Students need to see themselves as life-long learners who can contribute positively to society in the present and the future. We all need to embrace a reflective

view of our involvement with the current society that will develop into the future society we want to live in.

Changes in education have been influenced by many factors throughout history. As societal changes occurred from the common school era to the industrialization era to the globalization era to our current era, the need remained for schools to educate students for the demands of the workforce of each era (Rury, 2013). The perennial challenge is that the education system has to keep up with meeting the current and future needs of society. Through immigration and integration within the United States in the last decades, schools have become entwined in the disparities of equality and equity while working toward increasingly rigorous standards (Olson, 1999). Schools in the early years of US history responded to the pressure to produce students of good character who could work on farms or perform skilled trades while schools in the industrialization era focused on producing students who could go on to work within the factories. The focus of schools continued to change as society transformed. Change was inevitable.

As more factors added to the diversity of thought in the social and political realms in the later part of the 20th century, inequality outside of the schools increased and access to equal education for students decreased (Lagemann, 1999). Our current schools in the United States are challenged with so many types of pressures from political, economic, social, and cultural differences in expectations. The social and political landscape of the US has become so multifaceted just as the economic and cultural needs of society has become so diverse. In addition to these various pressures, our current society is changing so fast with the use of technology. Now, schools are preparing learners for jobs that may not even be created yet. We need to remain flexible so that we can adjust to unpredictable changes in expectations.

Schools have been established to achieve public purposes (Cohen, 1974; Darling-Hammond, 2010; Reimers, 2006; Rury, 2013). Such public purposes have evolved over time in order to develop students into members of society most appropriate for each era. The current educational system is a compilation of how societal changes affected formal schooling practices through historical changes from the first schools during the colonial era to the industrialization in the 19th century to the current focus on 21st century skills (Rury, 2013). Schools in the early 19th century focused on developing character and preserving the status quo while schools in the later 19th century were influenced heavily by the order, efficiency, and uniformity of industrialization (Cohen, 1974). From the mid-nineteenth century and through the twentieth century, schools have been trying to respond to the growth in immigration, social and economic order, urbanization, and industrialization (Cohen, 1974; Rury, 2013). With increased globalization, we have seen changes in the 21st century to align educational practices for desired community skills such as collaboration, innovation, creativity, and communication. Another purpose for the 21st century school is to produce global citizens who can navigate through cultural differences and perspectives (Reimers, 2006). To do this, we need to approach teaching new skills and content by using prior knowledge and experiences of students to make connections (Dong, 2014). Helping students to build connections in their learning is validating for students and allows students to feel and experience social, emotional, and academic success. We must also foster creativity and encourage innovation in students so they can continue to develop and contribute to global, federal, and local communities (Zhao, 2012). As students encounter new information or challenging content, educators should be teaching students how to connect new information to their prior knowledge as well as how to apply and own new knowledge to increase their potential (Fosnot, 2005). With the growing focus on globalization, schools will need to be vigilant in

teaching students to be global citizens with the knowledge, mindset, and skills to understand facts in history and to engage in acts that would uphold the Declaration of Human Rights (Reimers, 2006).

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights addresses the right to education, specifically stating that each person has equal access to education. It further defines that education should aim to create peace and understanding by teaching tolerance and friendship across human differences in race and religion (United Nations, 1949). Education in the United States has been made accessible through public education. However, the quality of education available throughout the nation varies because of the many changes and reforms affected by politics. Furthermore, the purpose of education has tilted more and more towards the academic focus on developing content knowledge and less towards human relations and understanding. Even though the education system in the United States is a decentralized system where states and local school districts have the freedom to choose their curriculum and direct their pedagogy, much of what happens in federal politics affects the local education systems. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 was enacted to set a clear role for the federal government in public education policy, particularly towards the education of disadvantaged student populations, and has been updated numerous times between 1965 to 2015 (ESEA, 1965).

Towards the end of the 20th century, focus shifted onto the current state of the education system when *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* was published in 1983 calling for systemic reform of the education system. *A Nation at Risk* focused on four areas: stronger graduation requirements, more time in school, better standards, and improved teaching with a fifth area in accountable leadership and fiscal support (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). There was a nationwide call to improve our educational

situation and raise the expectations for students. When *A Nation at Risk* was published, it gained much attention and schools throughout the United States jumped into education reform. The goal of *A Nation at Risk* was to increase the academic and content knowledge of students before high school graduation by the year 2000, yet the results from schools showed varying degrees of success in improvement and improvement could not be attributed to *A Nation at Risk* because of the lack of clear specification for curriculum reform (Hewitt, 2008). Much of the criticism around the recommendations in *A Nation at Risk* was that it was a politically charged report of the problems within education and offered very little in actual specific recommendations for how to change (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2004). Hence, the primary purpose of school was to instill content knowledge, but schools were not showing success as student achievement measured by comparative testing with other countries was low. Our education system that used to be regarded as highly productive and impactful towards commerce, industry, science, and technology seemed lacking compared to the student performance in other countries.

The focus on academic ability increased as schools sought to reform throughout the 20th century. *A Nation at Risk* helped launch the focus on academic achievement as a major indicator of success in education. In 1994, legislation was passed titled *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, which attempted to address other areas of education beyond academics such as parent involvement, safer schools, and professional development. *Goals 2000* was believed to bring more attention to serving the disadvantaged and improving the accessibility of quality education for all because of the increased involvement of the federal government in regulating state and local systemic education reform through policy making (Heise, 1994). Even with the increased federal involvement in state and local education systems, the *Goals 2000* targets were to have higher academic achievement and better curriculum and instruction.

The 21st century education system was affected by the updated Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as *No Child Left Behind*, enacted in 2001. The consistent preoccupation with academic achievement remained. In addition to measuring student academic achievement, *No Child Left Behind* also measured how effective local schools were. The effectiveness of schools were captured by reading and math standardized assessments. By 2006, in order to create more time for reading and math, 71% of 15,000 school districts reduced time spent on history, art, music, and other non-tested subjects (Dillon, 2006). *No Child Left Behind* had a strong emphasis on developing literacy in early childhood and disadvantaged children. The high focus on reading and math assessments caused many schools to focus primarily on teaching reading and math.

Throughout the years, the upgrades to the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965* drew attention to the fact that schools primary function is to provide education for all students. The most recent reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* included a revised version called the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, signed into law in 2015. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* kept some of the accountability measures of *No Child Left Behind* and added more choices for states and local districts to show quality achievement and education, such as extending choices for achievement assessments, including parent involvement and input on state education plans, and expanding personalized learning (Jones, 2016). During the time of this research, states were currently in the process of writing their education plans to align with the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, but the notion of schools existing to provide a well-rounded education and to teach more than just academic subjects has surfaced in the initial plans of some states, particularly in the state of Minnesota. This brings us closer to achieving what is stated in Article 26 of the Declaration of Human Rights (1948) that “education shall be directed to the full

development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”

The historical changes to the education system impacted the structures and content determining the quality of education for students but the changes are also reflective of the changing needs within each era of society. The effects of our democratic values on education was stated positively by the United Nations (2006) that our education system “has as its goal the establishment of a quality education that will enable all children to achieve their highest potential as individuals, serve effectively as citizens of a free society, and successfully compete in a global marketplace” (p. 1). This positive outlook by the United Nations is a reminder that our education system should be organized for our intended outcome. We are no longer in need of industrial workers like in the industrialization era nor workers who know a lot of facts. The future years of the 21st century will demand schools to shift their teaching to make learning relevant to students by engaging students with hands-on practice, fostering collaboration through teamwork, encouraging creativity with inquiry-based projects, guiding the transfer of skills to other subjects, and challenging students with problem-solving (Rosefsky Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). As we have seen in historical changes to schools, the future of learning in schools will continue to revolve around the purpose of preparing students to be productive members of society, which means schools will need to be able to predict what kind of productive member is needed in the future.

The one thing that remains constant throughout history and the foreseeable future is that students come to school with intrinsic desires to learn and do their best (Hollie, 2012). The purpose of schools should always include a commitment to see the possibilities in all students and to ensure success of all students to reach their full potentials in all aspects of life (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014). This calls for teachers to work beyond just teaching new

content. Teachers need to help students develop connections between old content and skills to new content and skills. In order to see the most effect on student learning, teachers need to develop strong positive relationships with students (Hattie, 2012). Teachers also need to build positive relationships with students in order to foster social and emotional potential. When we ensure student success towards all aspects of student potential, students will be able to contribute positively to their communities, regardless of what changes may occur in the future (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014).

The Role of the Principal

Just as schools have changed throughout history, the role of the school principal has also gone through transformations that increasingly impact the school. It is important to understand the role of the principal as I seek to answer my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*. Schools have been the center of the process for cultural and societal change because schools have the power to teach ideas and shape attitudes of students, parents, staff, and community (Rury, 2013). In order to create effective school reform from the inside, principals need to understand how to create learning for students and teachers that is effective and equitable (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Since school culture, climate, and community can directly impact the learning of students and teaching of staff, it is important to understand how principals can have much influence within the school since they often have oversight of the programs and operations of a school.

There are many factors that could determine an effective school, yet the most measured and most public factor is student achievement through standardized assessments. School standardized assessment information is published by local newspapers and posted on local and

state websites. Since *No Child Left Behind* in 2001, schools have been measured by how well their students perform on standardized assessments. Schools with higher percentages of student proficiency on standardized assessments were believed to be effective schools. When looking just at proficiency rates, students in effective schools were forty four percent higher in proficiency than ineffective schools (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). In addition, schools with higher percentages of student proficiency on standardized assessments were believed to have more effective teachers and principals, as portrayed by public information showing percentage of staff with advanced education degrees. Therefore, according to Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005), when schools have low student proficiency percentages, they needed to show that they would make changes or reform their instruction and structures. With repeated years of low proficiency, schools were required to go through restructuring as a reform strategy, which also included removing and replacing teachers and principals (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2010). This inequitable system of measuring schools, based on *No Child Left Behind*, did not account for other factors affecting their proficiency percentage such as lack of funding or resources, high student mobility, mental health needs, and inadequate professional development for teachers (Sergiovanni, 2009). This controversial system of school measurement and reform ultimately points to the notion that if a school is ineffective, the teachers and principals must be ineffective. Hence, ineffective teachers and principals should be replaced in order to see improvement. As controversial as this notion may seem, it follows the belief that effective teachers are the most influential and principals are the second-most influential in increasing student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Spiro, 2013). In fact, according to Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005), there is a determined .25% correlation between the effectiveness of a principal and average student achievement, which

means a highly effective principal can significantly impact overall student achievement. An example of this correlation is best described that as a principal increases leadership effectiveness from the 50th percentile to the 99th percentile, the average student achievement can also increase from the 50th percentile to the 72nd percentile.

Highly effective principals are noted as increasing student achievement by two to seven months in a school year (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013), so it is important to note qualities that make principals effective. Since the 1970s, learning and instruction became the center of their attention in schools so the role of principals changed from managing operations to leading instruction. It became important to develop teachers into principals so that the principals are noted to be effective if they are knowledgeable instructional leaders or principal teachers who set high expectations and rigorous goals and can create the school climate to support students to meet those high expectations (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Spiro, 2013). The contribution towards higher student achievement is typically not because of increased focus on academic assessments. Instead, effective principals are focused on achieving curriculum goals and equitable support for students and staff (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty 2005; Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010). In addition to providing instructional leadership around curriculum and pedagogy, effective principals are also able to facilitate home-school communication and be a change agent around school climate and culture (Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010). These essential areas are explored further in the next three sections: Instructional Leadership, School Climate and Culture, and Communication and Collaboration.

Instructional Leadership

Sergiovanni (2009) argued that being an instructional leader is what principals reported as one of the most important roles, but studies have shown that many principals struggle to spend

their time doing instructional leadership work. Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) presented that for principals to be doing the right work as instructional leaders they would need to make sure there was guaranteed and viable curriculum, challenging goals for teachers and students, and effective feedback to teachers and from teachers to students. Doing instructional leadership work means knowing what instructional practices to promote and improve among teaching staff, but it is also about setting clear and high expectations for teachers who would set clear and high expectations for students (Hattie, 2012; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). The influence with the most effect on student achievement is clear expectations, followed by other high influences such as feedback and clear, responsive instruction from teachers (Hattie, 2012).

With a stronger emphasis on student achievement as measured through standardized assessments, principals who are able to be effective instructional leaders understand curriculum development and instruction that addresses the academic standards expected of students (Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010). This brings up several areas that are assumed to be common knowledge for instructional leaders. Instructional leaders are expected to become self-efficacious in content knowledge and skills for curriculum development, which means they often play influential roles in supporting teachers with understanding standards and curriculum as well as improving instructional practice (Ediger, 2014; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005). It has become an expectation that principals know the general progression of the learning standards in content areas. For example, in the 2010 Minnesota Academic Standards for English Language Arts for Kindergarten through Grade 12, there is a progression of content knowledge and skills anchored in college and career readiness standards with reading, writing, speaking, viewing, listening, media literacy, and language (Minnesota Department of Education, 2011). Each set of grade-level standards covers the expectations for what students should be able to learn and do by

the end of each grade level, but does not cover how teachers should teach. The grade-level standards also make references towards content, such as mythology or the US constitution, but it does not provide a comprehensive list of content to include. Therefore, schools must determine the curriculum materials to use that they feel would provide the widest and deepest coverage of content and standards. Principals who are effective instructional leaders must lead curriculum development and improvement, which includes knowing what areas within curriculum are lacking, what areas within professional learning for teachers are needed, and how to assist teachers and learning situations (Ediger, 2014; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2009).

School Climate and Culture

In order for principals to become effective instructional leaders who can make purposeful school-wide impact, principals must also understand organizational systems and how to create the climate and culture that would be most conducive to ongoing curriculum and instructional improvement (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). With the changes in education and growth in innovation and technology in the 21st century, it would be appropriate to note how Morgan (1998) presents many metaphors of how organizations can function, including seeing the organization like a brain. If principals see the functions of the school like how a brain functions, the school would have many points of receiving input and feedback in order to extend and enhance processes or develop new ones. The brain metaphor presents that the school would collect, store, and evaluate data and processes in many teams throughout the school simultaneously so that patterns, trends, and new learning emerge from the process. This also assumes that the school functions effectively because there is a system of many teams of people to develop, enhance, and monitor learning (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Senge, 2006).

The principals leading the systems within the schools would have to pay attention to how the teams are interconnected and how they are learning to learn. Morgan (1998) calls this complex system of interdependent processes negative feedback, which involves the ability to “1. Sense, monitor, and scan significant aspects of their environment, 2. Relate this information to the operating norms that guide system behavior, 3. Detect significant deviations from these norms, and 4. initiate corrective action when discrepancies are detected” (p. 77). Ultimately, in order to become a school focused on learning, the school’s climate and culture which affect the overall school environment are critical elements for a principal to always be aware of for guiding improvement.

Principals who choose to lead effectively instead of merely managing the school need to understand the school’s culture (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). The school culture includes the norms, values, beliefs, and assumptions that contribute to the decisions and practices of people within the school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Peterson and Deal (1998) describe a positive school culture as an environment with shared understanding of what is important, shared sense of care and concern among members, and shared commitment to student learning. When the beliefs, values, attitudes, and assumptions are inappropriate or in opposition of the desired school culture, the effects can be detrimental towards student achievement (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Because of this, principals must always be aware of behaviors and mindsets of staff and the possible implications on school culture. Principals who are focused on developing a positive school culture emphasize harmonious interpersonal relationships between themselves and staff as well as among all staff (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Much of developing a positive school culture involves building strong positive relationships. According to Hattie (2012), strong positive relationships between teachers and students have a significant effect on

student achievement. However, it is important to note that strong positive relationships between principals and teachers as well as among teachers and support staff may be just as influential on the quality of teaching because of the direct impact on teacher morale (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). Because of this, principals who focus on the development of school culture as a learning environment in addition to instructional leadership will improve teacher morale and student achievement (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009).

Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) propose that principals who want to do the appropriate work to increase student achievement should set up school environments that are safe, orderly, and promote collegiality and professionalism. Three areas principals can contribute towards the school environment is to establish school-wide rules and norms for positive behavior among staff and students, structures and processes that allow teachers to be involved in decision making and leadership of the school, and responsive professional learning that fulfills the learning gaps of staff (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Provost, Boscardin, & Wells, 2010). Activities such as these can directly impact school climate and culture. School culture can be described as the shared norms, beliefs, values, and attitudes of people within the school while school climate can be described as the shared perceptions and total environmental quality within the school (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). In order to develop a school climate where teachers feel respected and students feel engaged with learning, principals will need to establish a community of trust and belonging through meaningful collaboration and clear communication.

Communication and Collaboration

Clear and purposeful communication of expectations, celebrations, mission, vision, and values can be one of the most important things a principal can do to support the desired school

culture (Peterson & Deal, 1998). Of the specific ways that a principal can shape school culture, Peterson & Deal (1998) share that communication in its various forms is essential, such as in what they say and do to communicate the core values, to honor and recognize others, to celebrate accomplishments, and to show the deeper mission of the school. Much of communication from a principal is verbal but some communication of school culture and climate is seen and felt throughout the school.

Signs of clear communication and collaboration can be evident right from the front entrance of the school and throughout the school by what is communicated on the walls of the school. The signs and bulletin boards within the school display the main school-wide expectations and hints of what principals focus their efforts on (Spiro, 2013). For example, there usually is a bulletin or poster sharing the school-wide vision and mission as well as bulletin boards tracking school-wide focus areas such as number of books read, minutes of student reading, parent-teacher group news and events, and other areas that are important to the principal and the school community. The visible artifacts on the walls within the hallways and classrooms are meant to showcase the important aspects of student learning. Much of what determines the things we choose to display on the walls is what we value and what we value should be evident to others immediately, just like if we value our children at home, we would see pictures of our children on the walls (Muhammad, 2009). As one of the main educational leaders in the school, principals who want to communicate their efforts and expectations clearly, must be aware of their own values, strengths, and weaknesses (Rosch & Kusel, 2010) and understand the importance of building community.

Effective principals who are instructional leaders and strong developers of healthy school culture and climate must also be able to communicate well with students, parents, staff, and

community members. Clear expectations and accountability lead to higher levels of learning (Hattie, 2012). Just as Hattie (2012) states that students use their best effort if they know clearly what they should strive to meet, Marzano, Waters, & McNulty (2005) presents that principals who know clearly what they should strive to meet increases student achievement. Principals do this by having a higher awareness of what is happening in the school and are able to use that information to address current and future problems. These principals can see amazing growth and determination from students and staff when they model what they want them to do and participate throughout the learning experience (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). This provides clear expectations and promotes high accountability for learning for everyone within the schools. Increasing accountability will make learning a life-long process that is focused on expanding abilities and practicing to get results that we truly want (Senge, 2006). Within a collaborative community, involving staff in the process “provides an opportunity to deepen accountability and commitment through engagement” (Block, 2008, p. 87). When staff choose to engage as owners in the school community, they are just as much a part of setting and modeling expectations as the principal is. One way to maintain a collaborative community is to maintain communication through a structured dialogue and discussion process where everyone is able to engage in collective learning and each person can express their opinions in order to practice collaboration (Senge, 2006). The desired outcome is that teachers will hold themselves accountable for engaging in dialogue and discussion and contribute towards a common goal.

Social Emotional Learning and Leadership in an Era of Accountability

This section presents gathered information that provides more clarity on the concepts of accountability, social emotional learning, and leadership that is needed to understand what is involved in one of my secondary questions, *What school-wide practices are considered*

representative of student leadership? Much of research on effective schools focuses on student achievement as the major outcome because of the notion that accountability means higher student achievement. However, there are many unmeasured factors that contribute to student achievement and measuring the effectiveness of a principal or a school based solely on the achievement results of the prior year does not reveal the unmeasured factors (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). Aside from studies on principal efficacy and findings that self-efficacy of principals has an indirect effect on student achievement (Ediger, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008) there continues to be studies showing that more effective principals can raise the achievement of a typical student significantly within a school year (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013). As discussed before, what makes a principal effective and how does an effective principal truly impact student achievement? Not only do effective school principals prioritize student achievement but they also equally prioritize the happiness of students (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). When principals are considering multiple factors and prioritizing student happiness, they are more likely to implement and promote programs that will benefit students in multiple ways. Just as there are many factors that contribute to student achievement, there are many influences on student happiness. The following subsections touch on the main influences on our future society beyond academics: Beyond Academic Learning, Purpose of Social Emotional Learning, Leadership in a Learning Organization, and Teaching Students to Learn and Lead in a Learning Organization.

Beyond Academic Learning

Education in our current era means more than academics and student achievement. Schools are challenged with rapid changes and face social and political pressures. Due to high accountability systems based on standardized tests, many students are given instruction and

interventions in academic areas. However, these same students may be lacking in social emotional skills and feel completely disengaged with others at school. The discrepancy and inequity in our school systems challenges us to address learning beyond academics and even beyond basic social emotional learning.

Educators teaching in the 21st century need to help students develop the skills that will be required for future success. Teachers will need to shift from being teachers of only content knowledge to teachers of creativity, collaboration, and critical thinking along with content knowledge. The current focus on mastery of content knowledge without ample allowances of creativity and application will end up producing students who can test well but not be able to think critically or creatively at a more intense level (Zhao, 2012). The 21st century brings a critical focus on the development of human capital, which is defined as “understanding and skills that contribute to economic advancement” (Rury, 2013, p. 13). Much of the economy and workforce contributing to a healthy economy are affected by the ability of students to possess the communication and collaboration skills to work alongside others. A small section of the economy and workforce is impacted by the ability of a smaller percentage of students to possess the innovative, creative, and critical thinking skills to advance to higher levels in the workplace (Zhao, 2012). Our current educational system often perpetuates this type of inequality. The discrepancy between equality and equity within schools mirrors the discrepancy within the workplace and economic environments. Zhao (2012) would describe the outcome of this inequity as sifting-out and “reducing human diversity into a few desirable skills” (p. 149). The broad idea of schools supporting a broad view of human capital is becoming actual systems that support selective processes of identifying and building human capital.

Given the selective nature of some school programs, the role of the teacher has become more challenging as the pressure on standardized test scores and student achievement has increased. Another factor that has made the role of the teacher even more challenging is the task of preparing students for a future in a society that is changing so rapidly. There is uncertainty around what specific skills schools are focused on. Schools in early history were entities for social integration and public good but as schools and society have developed, there is an increasing focus on individual advancement and personal benefit (Rury, 2013). Schools are no longer educating for the sole purpose of producing students of good character or students with specific trade skills. Schools have become the foundation of academic excellence, character development, sportsmanship behavior, and a whole multitude of other qualities that will prepare them to be global citizens (Reimers, 2006). This has stretched the role of educators beyond being a “teacher of content knowledge” to a juggler of many roles and responsibilities. Teachers and principals have experienced a growing tension between ensuring success of each student through individual growth and progress and meeting societal expectations that all students will be proficient and successful contributors towards society. Teachers need to be constantly reminded that their role and responsibility is to support learning for all students and ensure the success of every student, not just a selected group of students (Blankstein, 2010).

Public educational institutions are governed and funded by federal, state, and taxpayers. Schools can seem to function as isolated entities or as a piece within a school system but every school is accountable for meeting the demands of the federal, state, and community expectations on curriculum, instruction, social interactions, and student progress. Over the past years, the focus on student achievement has become the biggest influence on what schools are choosing to use for curriculum and instruction. This has caused more money to be spent on raising test

scores and less on expanding talent (Zhao, 2012). I believe it has also become increasingly more difficult for schools to pinpoint the exact skills students should have before they leave school because of a growing unpredictability of what skills will be most desirable for the future.

Schools would be remiss to ignore the suggestions and needs expressed by federal educational agencies, state education departments, school board members, community partners, and parents. Schools have a responsibility to all of these stakeholders because of political and social responsiveness. In fact, the more that schools can collaborate and create ownership-like relationships with all of the various external groups, the more supported schools will be in their efforts to ensure student success. As schools increase collaboration with external groups, the level of engagement between schools and external groups will also increase. Engagement is the desired outcome Block (2008) argues that “engagement, and the accountability that grows out of it, occurs when we ask people to be in charge of their own experience and act on the well-being of the whole” (p. 88). He contends that schools that can engage their community groups and agencies to become active contributors and partners will be more successful in preparing today’s students for a rapidly developing future.

Engagement is also needed for increased student success in the future. As learners, students need to feel connected to what they are learning. Students need to be taught to use their best effort and to hold themselves to high expectations. The range of cultures, languages, and learning differences of students have widened throughout the course of history. Students in US schools come from very different backgrounds so educators are challenged more than ever to obtain and maintain engagement of students in learning and moral reasoning (Reimers, 2006). Educators have to acknowledge and reinforce the cultural and linguistic backgrounds of students

without shaming students or avoiding differences. Delpit (2006) presents this responsibility of educators and learning by students as:

[S]tudents must be taught the codes needed to participate fully in the mainstream of American life, not by being forced to attend to hollow, inane, decontextualized subskills, but rather within the context of meaningful communicative endeavors; that they must be allowed the resource of the teacher's expert knowledge, while being helped to acknowledge their own 'expertness' as well. (p. 45)

Students do not come to school as empty vessels waiting to be filled. They come to school with a variation of background knowledge that may or may not match with what schools present and value. As educators become better at building positive relationships with students, they will find connections with students through interests, languages, cultures, or other areas. With increased connections, students will develop and maintain more engagement in reinforcing learned skills and knowledge as well as new skills and knowledge (Hollie, 2012). Students will be more prepared to fulfill their responsibility of contributing to the whole society.

Students and teachers need to be equally willing to learn from one another in order to build the collaborative and positive environment that is conducive to 21st century learning. Our future is constantly being shaped by what the current practices involve just as our current practices are influenced by what we perceive to be important in the future. Despite the transformations and changes in our expectations for students, students usually meet the expectations we set for them. As long as the expectations are clear, students are responsible for meeting the expectations just as much as teachers are responsible for ensuring students meet the expectations (Hattie, 2012). Currently, teachers feel pressure from standardized tests but they are also looking for more ways to connect with their students and to expand the strengths and

talents of each student. Learning still remains at the core of schools. Engaging in learning with a reflective approach will ensure that students and teachers maintain their determination and focus on success. Our future depends on our ability to help our students see their potential impact, which suggests the need to look deeper at social emotional learning.

Purpose of Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (SEL) is intended to develop social and emotional skills in students based on the belief that the best student learning occurs within an environment with supportive relationships to make learning meaningful, engaging, and challenging (CASEL, 2012). Jones, Greenberg, and Crowley (2015) studied the connection between early social emotional skills in Kindergarteners and the connection to levels of young adult functioning and found that there was a significant correlation. This research involved studying longitudinal data and a sample group of young adults from an intervention program designed to reduce aggression in children identified with a risk of long-term behavioral problems. The level of social emotional skills in Kindergarteners were highly predictive of whether they graduated from high school on time, completed a college degree, obtained stable employment, and worked full time in young adulthood (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). With high correlations of social emotional skills to later functional living, it is important to understand what is involved in social emotional learning.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) produced a guide in 2003 that displayed 80 different social emotional learning programs and has since produced a new guide in 2013 that narrowed their studies to 23 social emotional learning programs, based on a specific set of criteria. According to CASEL (2012), there are five interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that must exist for students in

effective social emotional learning programs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Self-awareness includes being able to recognize one's emotions, strengths, and limitations and having a healthy sense of confidence. Self-management involves being able to regulate one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors and working towards goals. Social awareness refers to being able to empathize with others in a diverse setting and using appropriate social and ethical norms and resources. Relationship skills include being able to establish and maintain healthy relationships with diverse people and communicating responsively with others. Responsible decision-making involves being able to make constructive choices and knowing how to consider the various perspectives, evidence, and impact on self and others. In addition to these five competencies, social emotional learning programs should also improve the attitudes and beliefs that students have about themselves and others (CASEL, 2012).

Although CASEL (2012) presented all five competencies as equally important in their evaluations of social emotional learning programs, a survey by Education Week Research Center (2015) showed that even though all five competencies were rated as very important by at least 75% of educators, the self-management competency received the top rating by 87% of educators. Additionally, only 14% of educators reported that more than 75% of students had strong social and emotional skills (Education Week Research Center, 2015). This low percentage that was reported brings the question upon what educators actually considered to be the purpose of social emotional learning and which programs they were using within their schools to address social emotional learning. If schools are using a social emotional learning program that involves explicit social emotional learning skills instruction, integration into academic areas, and aligned teacher instructional practices then the outcomes should include positive social behavior, fewer

conduct problems, less emotional distress, and academic success (CASEL, 2012). The challenge of using social emotional learning programs within schools falls on principals and teachers to select the most appropriate evidence-based social emotional learning programs, to ensure high-quality implementation, and to support effective on-going learning and refinement. Since over 75% of educators reported that reducing school discipline problems, improving student achievement, and improving school climate were all important outcomes of teaching social and emotional skills, it is interesting to also find that 48% of educators feel that students' social emotional learning receives too little attention in their schools and 50% feel that social emotional learning receives just the right amount of attention (Education Week Research Center, 2015).

Of the twenty three social emotional learning programs reviewed and presented by CASEL (2012), only a few met all the criteria that was used for evaluation. CASEL (2012) used a set of criteria that consisted of reviewing the indicators of program design and implementation as well as evidence of effectiveness, as measured by academic performance, positive social behavior, behavior incidents, and emotional distress of students. One of the social emotional learning programs reported to be used most out of fifteen identified programs (18%) was Responsive Classroom (Education Week Research Center, 2015). Responsive Classroom was reviewed and reported to uphold many of the indicators for program design and implementation but only showed effectiveness towards improved academic performance while improved positive social behavior, reduced conduct problems, and reduced emotional distress were non-evident (CASEL, 2012).

Responsive Classroom is an approach towards creating classrooms using a social curriculum that is responsive to students and the various academic, social, and emotional needs (CASEL, 2012; Walther-Thomas & Brownell, 1999). When schools use Responsive Classroom,

they set up classroom communities that engage in morning meetings, guided academic discoveries, logical consequences, academic choices, positive teacher language, guidelines for working with families, and collaborative problem solving. Implementation of Responsive Classroom begins with a required initial 30 hours of training that is conducted over two parts of four and a half days. Even with training, new implementers of Responsive Classroom may struggle with organizing and conceptualizing how to implement all the required components which makes implementation of Responsive Classroom inconsistent (Walther-Thomas & Brownell, 1999). Further, CASEL (2012) reported that Responsive Classroom fell short of meeting the evaluation outcomes for increased positive social behavior, reduced conduct problems, and reduced emotional distress while Education Week Research Center (2015) reported that Responsive Classroom was only considered to improve student behavior by 32% of educators compared to school-wide behavioral-management programs (59%). The perceptions gathered by the Education Week Research Center (2015) and the evaluation of social emotional learning programs by CASEL (2012) suggest that it would be difficult to find and use only one program that would meet all the indicators for program design and implementation as well as meet all the outcomes for effectiveness in improving academic performance, improving positive social behavior, reducing conduct problems, and reducing emotional distress. Hence, multiple social emotional learning programs are available and can be used in combination to meet the various needs and to attain various outcomes.

As shown in the previous parts on the Role of the Principal, selecting programs or leading the selection of programs to implement within the school is an important and essential practice of principals. In addition to selecting, implementing, and supporting academic curriculum and instruction, principals are critical to the selection, implementation, and support of social

emotional learning programs. Principals need to work with teachers and support staff within the school as well as with district leadership in order to ensure that systemic social, emotional, and academic learning becomes the overarching framework that would keep the school and district aligned with integrated programming, shared vision, and high-quality (CASEL, 2012). In order to do this well, principals would need to reflect on their leadership within a learning organization.

Leadership in a Learning Organization

My leadership experiences have taught me we should not just follow the crowd. Instead, we should each lead in the community. Being a part of an organization calls for us to contribute towards the many layers that promote healthy reflection and growth in ourselves and in the organization (Senge, 2006). Every person within an organization has the potential to lead in different areas so leaders should seek and support various individuals with potentials in order to strengthen the whole learning organization. A learning organization is an entity where learning is continuous and each individual gives their best effort to expand their individual knowledge as well as contribute to the collective goal (Senge, 2006). In order to promote an effective learning organization, leaders need to encourage personal growth, personal vision, and ownership in a community. As Block (2008) describes, “community is fundamentally an interdependent human system given form by the conversation it holds with itself” (p. 30). Students, teachers, and principals are all leaders in an effective learning organization just like they are all owners in a strong positive community. One of the disciplines that is essential for inspiring others within a learning organization is personal mastery. Senge (2006) describes personal mastery as “personal growth and learning” and that “people with high levels of personal mastery are continually expanding their ability to create the results in life they truly seek” (p. 131). Individuals will

work with more dedication towards a common goal within an organization when they see or feel personal growth as a result of their work. Once individuals have embraced personal mastery as a motivator, they also begin to clarify what the desired outcome is and what the current reality poses as challenges to outcomes (Senge, 2006). Effective principals in a leadership-based school culture will strive to recognize the leadership potential of others and develop areas that are needed. Learning becomes essential in the decision to begin changes to the practice and curriculum to produce a better program (Hall & Hord, 2011).

Another discipline that is essential for inspiring others in a learning organization is shared vision. In order to build shared vision within an organization, people in the organization should develop their own personal visions. When people do not have their own personal visions, they will default to following the crowd and practicing compliance instead of commitment (Senge, 2006). When people have strong personal visions, they are more committed to building a shared vision. People with strong personal visions are also more likely to have high levels of personal mastery, as Senge (2006) explains the foundational need for personal mastery to reach shared vision as “those who will contribute the most toward realizing a lofty vision will be those who can ‘hold’ this creative tension: remain clear on the vision and continue to inquire into current reality” (p. 197). Thus, principals need to remain cognizant of the need to allow and support the development of personal vision.

Teachers and students need to know themselves and develop strong personal directions driven by their values. People cannot be forced to take on someone else’s vision or to develop a vision. The best thing for leaders to do towards building personal vision and shared vision is to model and share their own visions that would encourage individuals to share their personal visions (Senge, 2006). Each person’s vision becomes a piece of the shared vision of the learning

organization. As each person becomes an essential piece of the learning organization, it is important that each person feels a commitment to the shared vision of the learning organization. In fact, Senge (2006) presents that “the committed person brings an energy, passion, and excitement that cannot be generated by someone who is only compliant” (p. 205).

The third discipline essential for inspiring others in a learning organization is team learning, which is synonymous with creating ownership in a community. Senge (2006) refers to this discipline as “team learning”, in which “a group of people function as a whole” and “there is commonality of purpose, a shared vision, and understanding of how to complement one another’s efforts” (p. 217). A learning organization that has high levels of team learning would have high levels of communication and openness among all members. Members would need to feel a sense of ownership within groups as well as within the organization.

Consumers do not see themselves as owners in a community and will rely on others to fulfill their needs (Block, 2008). Consumers will see themselves as a part of a team only when they can benefit from the actions of the team. In order to reach a high level of team learning, members of the team need to understand the alignment of their personal visions to the shared vision (Senge, 2006). This requires a gradual shift of individuals from a self-centered perspective of fulfilling their own needs to a shared perspective of how they can each contribute to the whole. Once individual ownership towards the community is developed, the community or organization begins to focus more on growing and learning.

Building structured time for dialogue, discussion, and reflection can lead each individual to a stronger sense of self and closer to having defined personal visions (Senge, 2006). Block (2008) sums up in the statement that “a place of belonging is one where all voices have value” (p.96). A learning organization that has shared leadership will be more successful in

implementing initiatives and changes. Leadership style influences the level of implementation success as well as the level of shared leadership (Hall & Hord, 2011). To create a learning organization with a strong group of leaders to share the responsibility of solving problems and making decisions, principals need to focus on building a cohesive community in which staff would feel a sense of ownership and belonging is essential.

Being mindful in collaboration with others opens up possibilities within a learning organization. In many instances where collaboration is encouraged or expected, there should be appropriate protocols in place that would also encourage adequate conversation and reflection. As we engage in conversation with others and reflect on new information, we should approach learning with fresh minds in order to maintain excitement and develop further ideas as a part of being mindful (Langer, 1997). In addition, we are engaging in a constructivist learning environment, in which we are focused on cognitive development and deep understanding (Fosnot, 2005). Collaboration allows us, as unique individuals, to create our own meaning from what we learn and discuss, to engage in conversation as a way to clarify meaning, and to reflect deeply and broadly with others. All of these actions not only promote further learning but also allow each of us to see possibilities that we were not aware of before. Individuals will need to choose to engage in mindful collaboration since “possibility is not a prediction, or a goal; it is a choice to bring a certain quality into our lives” (Block, 2008, p. 42).

In order to look deeper into a mindful learning community, there needs to be an establishment of the elements that are needed for a constructivist learning environment. Constructivism implies that people do not have objective realities and they are constructing their own realities and meanings as well as transforming their own realities (Fosnot, 2005). As social human beings, people are likely to form their meanings and develop their understanding of new

information through a series of social interactions, negotiations, and moral reasoning (Reimers, 2006). Humans may vary in the value they place upon collectivity but they will seek out ways of belonging even if their dominant cultural value is to be individualistic (Hofstede, 2001).

The ability to negotiate beliefs and create a whole new meaning is reflective of a constructivist frame of mind (Fosnot, 2005). Multiple perspectives and meanings should be openly shared. von Glasersfeld (2005) explains that each individual constructs their own meaning and it is difficult to see whether any meanings are exactly the same even if they are compatible and may appear similar. This means that the environment would need to remain open enough for constructing new knowledge, meaning, and learning. In order to establish such an environment in educational organizations, mindful collaboration would need to be the underlying frame of mind. Being mindful is a practice that requires an open mind and a deeper sense of participation in learning. Gonzalez (2012) presents that mindful leadership will help leaders effectively work through constant changes because leaders will have a clear presence of mind to lead from.

Being mindful in collaboration means that leaders are continuously engaged in learning. Approaching learning of skills or knowledge as though they were new learning opportunities each time and being able to see the differences and multiple perspectives is a way of learning that Langer (1997) represents as sideways learning. We often think about learning as a way to build up knowledge and can even think about learning in linear terms because of the focus on mastery and adding on of new skills, but Langer (1997) proposes that if we want to engage in mindful learning, we should treat all information as though the information might be new and find the distinct ways to make connections between new and old information. This forces us to focus on the present learning environment and accept the ongoing changes within the learning

environment. Being present, engaging in learning, maintaining awareness of self and others, and remaining calm, positive, and compassionate are all important to practice in order to allow mindful leadership to occur through learning (Gonzalez, 2012).

One of the ways that mindful leadership and learning fosters a constructivist learning environment is through the expectation for each person to negotiate personal meaning from what is presented. Marturano (2015) presents that focus, clarity, creativity, and compassion are four fundamentals that originate from the heart and mind. These four fundamentals can be strengthened and cultivated through mindful leadership training and practice. Getting to mindful leadership excellence would involve a practice of meditation and a constructivist-like learning approach, even in the midst of a chaotic environment (Marturano, 2015). In many work environments, we all have different mental models, or assumptions and generalizations, that drive our beliefs and actions but we must find ways to challenge those mental models (Senge, 2006). When we fixate our beliefs and actions without the willingness to openly share or listen to other perspectives, we end up in a stagnant or turbulent work environment. In order to change that work environment into a learning environment, protocols must be set to encourage everyone to be open through sharing and listening to others. It is also necessary to create uncertainty as multiple perspectives are shared so that individuals do not automatically look for the right and wrong answers but instead, start to find other perspectives. Langer (1997) explains “just as we might turn a figure upside down to copy it more accurately, we may view the same phenomenon from several perspectives to discover the information buried beneath our preconceived categories” (p. 133). Once we have viewed presented information from multiple perspectives, we can collectively devise our interpretations or meanings within the current context.

Another way that mindful collaboration can foster a constructivist learning environment is through engagement in conversation as a way to clarify meaning. The type of conversation I am referring to is a systematic method of using dialogue and discussion. A dialogue allows for divergent thinking to happen and a discussion converges into a decision (Senge, 2006). Being able to move between dialogue and discussion requires a purposeful and meaningful distinction for individuals. It also requires individuals to listen attentively and to be non-judgmental towards others. Practicing dialogue and discussion can happen within a large group or a small group environment. Block (2008) further explains that the small group is “where people overcome isolation and where the experience of belonging is created” (p.95).

The third way that mindful collaboration fosters a constructivist learning environment is through the expectation of teams to learn together by being vulnerable and reflective of their individual and collective knowledge. A team is only as strong as the individuals who make up the team. Teams function based on the structure that we create. We can compare the structure of a team to the structure of knowledge construction. Fosnot and Perry (2005) describes:

Structures are characterized by three properties: wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation. Wholeness refers to the fact that the system is a whole that may in fact be larger than the sum of its parts...Transformation explains the relations between the parts, how one part becomes another...Each structure is also self-regulating, meaning that structures inherently seek self-maintenance, organization, and closure. (p.21)

The wholeness of teams follows this same sense of structural properties. When individuals on a team are able to face their vulnerabilities and are willing to take risks in sharing their vulnerabilities, the power of the team to pull together to collectively support one another would bring about the transformation that is needed (Senge, 2006). In order for knowledge construction

to occur within a team, team members would need to adjust the working relationship of team members and be willing to negotiate. Additionally, learning to become a team takes a lot of practice. Individuals can often have high levels of skills yet when they are put together on a team, they will still need to practice being a team because developing team skills is more challenging (Senge, 2006). Without lots of opportunities and time to practice team skills, the team will often default to using only the individual skills of team members. This would hinder the constructivist learning environment.

In order for teams to engage in learning together as part of their productivity towards a common goal, individual team members must be willing to reflect deeply about themselves as individuals and as a team (DuFour and Eaker, 1998; Senge, 2006). Some teams show great progress in how they approach learning together while some teams allow one person to dominate the direction for their team. Just as Fosnot (2005) describes structures as having wholeness, transformation, and self-regulation, DuFour and Eaker (1998) and Reeves (2009) describe similar needs for school teams to be collective, embracing change, and seeking growth.

A constructivist learning environment would be an ideal type of environment for a learning organization with growth and increased possibilities. When individuals become more mindful of their knowledge levels, vulnerabilities, and connections to others around them, they will be able to see the possibilities rather than try to solve problems. As mentioned earlier, building a constructivist learning environment requires mindful individuals who can choose to bring possibilities into their lives. These individuals will enrich the quality of their lives through collaboration that will strengthen each individual just as much as the collective group. Engaging in mindful collaboration means being willing to put all assumptions aside, engage in conversation with others, and reflect at a deeper level, which can lead to a mindful learning

community. Having a mindful learning community is essential to sustaining the personal mastery needed for a learning organization (Senge, 2006).

Teaching Students to Learn and Lead in a Learning Organization

Throughout our educational history the focus on academic achievement increased as the desire to address social and emotional needs of students decreased (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Rury, 2013). As explained by Rury (2013), schools that once nurtured students and taught them emotional, social, and academic skills to succeed in life had become obsessed with academic achievement only. This obsession with academic achievement brought about a focus on mastery. Mastery became synonymous with high academic test performance (Guskey, 2014). Building mastery means providing repeated practice, clear academic goals, and appropriate assessment but doing all of these things does not automatically increase a student's level of academic achievement. There are still factors of social and emotional needs that should be addressed either before or along with academic needs.

As schools become more predictable and the process of academic learning becomes more automated, we need to remember students and teachers as unique and highly variable human beings (Block, 2003). Treating students as highly variable human beings suggests that we need to get to know each student as an individual with social, cultural, and emotional differences. Gathering information on students' background knowledge and then using that background knowledge to customize instruction towards the perceived strengths of students is an effective process (Dong, 2014). As reviewed by CASEL (2012), there are many social emotional learning programs and each program has its strengths and limitations in meeting all the outcomes of effectiveness. Currently, social emotional learning programs do not address cultural and linguistic differences of students, causing us to remember that variations in implementation of

social emotional learning will occur just as variations in human behaviors and skills will occur in students in teachers. However, in order to support each student to reach their full potential, developing positive relationships is essential.

Positive relationships that are grounded in trust open a two-way communication and foster the exchange of knowledge that leads to student learning success (Blankstein, 2010). A further argument for building positive relationships with students is best represented by Block (2009) as he describes the relation between a citizen and the community and that “our work is to build the capacity of citizens to be accountable and to become creators of community” (p. 64). To develop positive relationships, educators need to show that they care about each student to gain their trust. Developing positive relationships with students is challenging and unpredictable because students can be just as unpredictable as adults (Blankstein, 2010). When students and teachers are equally unpredictable, the best solution is to nurture both student and teacher potentials. Similar to nurturing the potential of students, the process of leading teachers to shift their belief system needs to be just as clear and supportive.

Relational trust is needed with adults just as much as with students (Blankstein, 2010). If principals want teachers to be able to build positive relationships with students, principals also need to build positive relationships with teachers in the school because “relationships are the real work of school improvement” and relational trust “focuses on distinct role relationships and the obligations and expectations associated with each” (Blankstein, 2010, p. 67). Building positive relationships among teachers is just as important as building positive relationships between teachers and students (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). The ongoing interconnectedness of building positive relationships among students, teachers, and other staff in the school has become

the underlying foundation within the school community, just like teamwork and personal mastery are essential to a learning organization (Senge, 2006).

It is more important than ever that schools develop the social, emotional, and learning potentials of students, given the changing social and economic landscape of our society. In learning new skills, Langer (1997) states that “we can learn a skill by accepting at face value what we are told about how to practice it or we can come to an understanding over time of what the skill entails” (p. 17). Students need to overcome barriers and be resilient in the face of adversity. Academic learning should happen regardless of whether social, emotional, or mental health is stable. There is a need to shift our perceptions and focus on the areas that students need most. Students need to gain the skills to be successful and to learn new skills on their own. To do all of these things we wish for, we need to partake in action together but it is a daunting task to figure out the plan of action. We can spend all of our time finding or creating a plan of action, but the best plan is to build relationships with students that will open up possibilities. We need to begin by getting to know our students and the possibilities for them.

There isn't a solid step-by-step method for developing positive relationships or for meeting the emotional and social needs of every student because humans hold very diverse beliefs (Delpit, 2006). We need to be courageous adults and make the necessary changes towards our beliefs if we want to see growth in our students. Delpit (2006) shares, “we do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs” (p. 46). This suggests that beliefs will inform perceptions and cause others to act accordingly. Influencing the beliefs of others and developing their full potentials involves positive social and emotional relationships and connections between new knowledge to prior knowledge. The goal of social emotional learning is to give students ways to create meaning and reach for full potentials as

expressed by Langer (1997) that “we can see that how we interact with our environment is not a matter of fitting ourselves to an external norm; rather, it is a process by which we give form, meaning, and value to our world” (p. 137).

My conclusion is that building leadership skills in children requires shared leadership among principals, teachers, and students. Similar to the required processes and structures described in a learning organization, many stakeholders and processes are involved in developing student leadership. Pedersen, Yager, and Yager (2012) found that student leadership roles created a positive school environment, increased positive emotional growth of student leaders, and influenced positive peer modeling. This finding also confirmed the notion that student leadership within schools increased positive school climate. While social emotional skills are important in determining how well students can meet the demand of the classroom and school, there is a heavy focus on teaching social emotional skills for individual student development and a high emphasis on teacher ability in teaching social emotional skills (CASEL, 2012). Teaching students to lead within the school community means going beyond developing social emotional skills to developing entrepreneurial skills that meet the current 21st century competencies that will be needed for the workforce (Steinberg and Li, 2014). In order to teach leadership skills in students effectively, there must be a system for distributed leadership and learning within the school (Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012). School principals are essential in developing this system for distributed leadership. Effective principals understand the role that school culture plays and are better equipped to shape the values, beliefs, and attitudes to promote and support a stable and nurturing learning environment (Angus, Doris, & Bosch, 2009). Just as Senge (2006) would describe the learning organization to include shared vision, personal mastery, and team work, Pedersen, Yager, & Yager (2012) also found that when students,

teachers, and principals are all part of shared leadership and learning, there is a higher level of implementation of initiatives.

Covey, Covey, Summers, and Hatch (2014) explain that in order to develop leadership and the whole person through mind, body, heart, and spirit, we need to start with “the belief that there is *greatness* in every student and every staff member” (p. 13). This greatness may be different strengths and talents but the important mindset is to believe that everyone has greatness and potential for leadership in different ways. This mindset is synonymous with Dweck’s (2006) stance on the growth mindset that someone with a growth mindset believes that personal qualities can be cultivated and improved regardless of the conditions. People with growth mindsets also see strengths in themselves and in others and use those strengths in their leadership. Teaching leadership skills in students enhances social emotional skills by giving students more opportunities to use leadership skills in meaningful ways that will benefit others.

One of the emerging student leadership frameworks used in schools is *The Leader in Me*. *The Leader in Me* is a whole school transformation process that helps schools take into account the current school culture and goals and devise a plan for making the changes needed to reach the desired vision for school culture and goals. Within this transformation process is the direct teaching of leadership skills for students and empowerment of students and staff to take on leadership opportunities. *The Leader in Me* is centered on building 21st century social and emotional skills that will help improve the overall success of students by using Covey’s (2004) *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. The foundational belief that must permeate throughout the school and guide principals and teachers just as much as it should guide the overall behaviors and actions of every person is the belief that there is greatness in everyone (Covey, 2004; Covey, Covey, Summers & Hatch, 2014). Once principals and teachers hold the belief that there is

greatness in everyone, the 7 habits are taught in order and taught explicitly to students and student leadership opportunities are developed and supported every year. Those 7 habits are 1) Be Proactive, 2) Begin with the End in Mind, 3) Put First Things First, 4) Think Win-Win, 5) Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood, 6) Synergize, and 7) Sharpen the Saw (Covey, 2004). Each of the 7 habits has been shown to align with 21st century components as well as social emotional skills (Franklin Covey, 2015; Steinberg & Li, 2014). Steinberg & Li (2014) present the alignment of the 7 habits to 21st century components as:

21st Century Competencies	7 Habits Alignment
Collaboration and Leadership	Habit 6: Synergize Habit 1: Be Proactive
Critical Thinking, Problem Solving and Decision Making	Habit 2: Begin with the End in Mind Habit 3: Put First Things First
Creativity and Innovation	Habit 6: Synergize
Social, Cultural, Global and Environmental Responsibility	Habit 4: Think Win-Win
Communication	Habit 5: Seek First to Understand, Then to Be Understood
Lifelong Learning, Personal Management, and Well-being	Habit 7: Sharpen the Saw

This aligns with the work of Education Direction (2015), which sought out to survey 669 nationwide K-12 principals to learn their perspectives on social emotional learning, student leadership, and academic influences within whole-school improvement programs. The study sought perspectives comparing *The Leader in Me*, *Positive Behavior Intervention Strategies*, *Response to Intervention*, and *Professional Learning Communities* in improving school culture, improving student academic achievement, and teaching 21st century social emotional skills. Education Direction (2015) reported 99% of principals believed 21st century social emotional and

leadership skills were equally or more important than academic skills in success of students as well as 84% of principals believed in the concept that children can be leaders in their schools.

Teaching students to learn and lead in schools requires a growth mindset along with clear expectations, engagement in the learning process, and support for each person within the school. The indicators for program design and implementation set by CASEL (2012) includes indicators for explicit skills instruction for students, integration with academic curriculum areas, and teacher instructional practices. These classroom approaches to teaching social emotional learning skills are important for ensuring implementation of social emotional learning programs. Teaching student leadership skills requires schools to see themselves as learning communities and to engage in explicit and clear modeling and teaching of leadership skills for staff and students (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014). Effective principals leading in schools that view themselves as learning organizations would be clear about their own short and long term goals for the school and would involve staff and students in decision-making as well as involve themselves in learning alongside staff and students (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Pedersen, Yager, & Yager, 2012).

Summary

There is limited research in the area of principals' perspectives on student leadership; however, there are many underlying concepts and understandings that must be explored to learn more about the importance of student leadership. In this chapter, I presented research and information that would create a deeper understanding of the historical and future purpose of school, the factors that affect the role of the principal, and the underlying concepts that affect the impact of social emotional learning and leadership in students. All of the information from the research gathered and shared in this chapter serves the purpose of expanding the idea that there is

much for principals to consider as they view their current school culture and guide the staff and students towards the desired vision of school culture and practices. All of the information gathered for this chapter also provides context and purpose for developing leadership in students. School principals play a vital role in developing the culture, climate, and focus within schools that would best foster leadership in students.

Each part of this chapter expanded into further areas that were deemed significant to include in order to have a more holistic view of what was important about my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*”. Each subsection within the parts attempted to provide more background information that would lead to a deeper understanding of the complex systems, processes, and cultures within schools that would affect how principals decide to lead and how they view student leadership within their schools. As I engage in the research process, my hope is that I will uncover further information that will inform my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

I presented information on social emotional learning programs but did not feel it was necessary to describe every social emotional learning program that exists in our schools. Instead, I described the most widely used social emotional learning program, *Responsive Classroom*, as an example of what is important about social emotional learning and what are considered desired outcomes of social emotional learning in students. I also presented information only on one framework, *The Leader in Me*, that focused on student leadership. *The Leader in Me* is one example of a transformation process that integrates social emotional learning, 21st century

components, and leadership skills into the curriculum, practices, and school culture but the broader concept of student leadership and the potential impact on student success in school and in future endeavors are the important outcomes in 21st century education. Social emotional learning and 21st century components have received more attention and research in the last decade but student leadership, especially at the elementary school level, is still an emerging area that has not been researched as extensively yet.

With the development of the American educational system throughout history, the purpose of education may have seemed unclear at times, but it is important to note that the American educational system is still set up to try to meet the Article 26 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights which defines the purpose of education as “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” (United Nations, 1949). As we continue into 21st century learning, it is imperative that schools continue to develop human personality and human potential. Teaching social emotional skills and leadership to students will support the development of human personality and potential. Piaget (1973) believed in the power of teaching self-governance and leadership to students by providing the social environment that would allow students to practice their leadership because if lessons around leadership “are given without social experience to support them, their practical results risk being of little worth” (p.130). Hence, schools need to pursue the goal of developing ethical future leaders by providing them with the opportunities and environments to learn, grow, and lead.

In Chapter 3, I explain the qualitative paradigm and the research methodology I intend to use to gather, analyze, and provide further insight on the elementary principal’s perspective on the school’s role in developing student leadership. By using grounded theory as my analysis

methodology, the theory about elementary principals' viewpoints on schools and student leadership can emerge from the data collected through surveys, elite interviews, and observations.

CHAPTER 3

“We see the world not as it is but as we are.”

-Stephen Covey

The purpose of this research is to seek an understanding towards my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, and to gather further information to address my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership? and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?* I chose to use the qualitative research paradigm to address my research questions. This chapter presents the research methodology I used, reasons why qualitative research methodologies were most appropriate for gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing data towards my research questions, the particular data collection methods, and a summary of the data analysis methods. This research was conducted with schools and principals in a large midwestern metro area as participants for the different data collection methods of survey, elite interviews, and field observations.

This chapter is comprised of six sections. The sections are Explanation of Research Method, Setting and Participants, The Survey and Survey Participants, Elite Interviews, Field Observations, and Summary. Each section describes the particular methods and participants in detail. However, each section may abstractly reflect various overlapping aspects of grounded theory research; Charmaz (2014) describes this notion best as “a flash of insight or instantaneous realization of analytic connections can happen any time during the research process” (p. 17). Hence, this notion regarding the research process with the intertwined elements of my influence

as the researcher, data gathering, connections, data analysis, interpretation, and reflection leads into a constructivist approach or what Charmaz (2014) defines as constructing grounded theory.

Explanation of Research Method

There has not been a great deal of research on the topic of student leadership in the K-12 school system yet and much of the literature is mostly focused only on the impact student leadership has on students. My research was aimed at collecting, analyzing, and generating a clear theory on why the beliefs of school principals affect the level of student leadership in schools. This type of research depended on the data that was gathered from the experiences and perceptions of school principals to provide more detail and depth to the theory of why school leadership matters in implementing student leadership. This type of research entailed using grounded theory as the research method.

Grounded theory involves using a constant comparative method in gathering and analyzing data from surveys and interviews, ultimately concluding with a deeper understanding of a phenomena and producing a theory (Charmaz, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). My research was focused on gathering perspectives and beliefs from principals through online survey and elite interviews. This type of grounded theory design is identified as a constructivist grounded theory because of the focus on perspectives, feelings, and beliefs of participants (Charmaz, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Charmaz (2014) describes constructivist grounded theory as being able to “acknowledge subjectivity and the researcher’s involvement in the construction and interpretation of data” (p. 14). Using grounded theory means collecting and analyzing data at the same time, which may make the coding of data and theorizing from data more difficult to achieve. Charmaz (2014) suggests that any person engaging in grounded theory should engage in these five strategies as evidence of a grounded theory study:

1. Conduct data collection and analysis simultaneously in an iterative process
2. Analyze actions and processes rather than themes and structure
3. Use comparative methods
4. Draw on data (e.g. narratives and descriptions) in service of developing new conceptual categories
5. Develop inductive abstract analytic categories through systematic data analysis (p. 15).

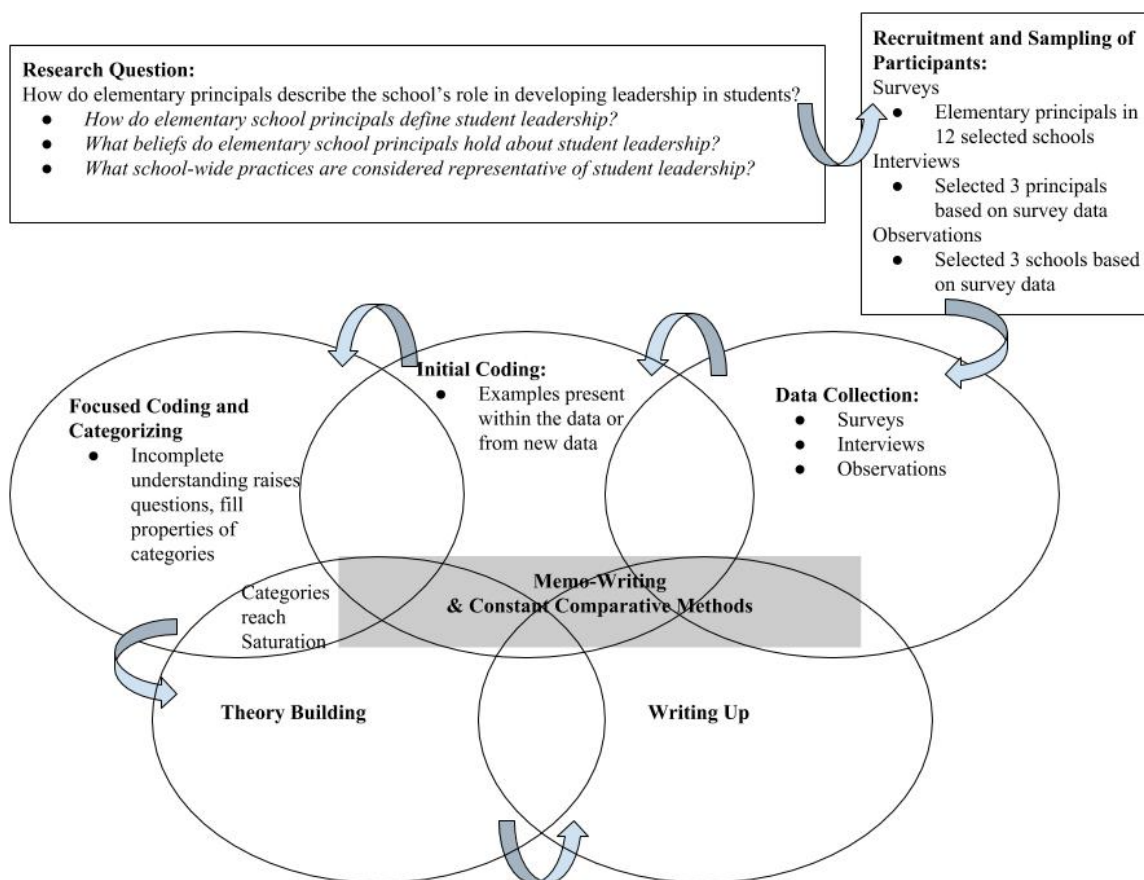
There are four additional strategies that should be used by individuals engaged in grounded theory. However, the four additional strategies that may be used by grounded theorists are less evident and harder to determine, and Charmaz (2014) considers them to be reflective of actions in the first five strategies. The four additional strategies are:

6. Emphasize theory construction rather than description or application of current theories
7. Engage in theoretical sampling
8. Search for variation in the studied categories or process
9. Pursue developing a category rather than covering a specific empirical topic (Charmaz, 2014, p. 15).

Grounded theory research does not always follow a linear research process. Participants are human subjects and the research methods involve human interactions, which primarily are open-ended interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Charmaz (2014) presents a visual representation of the common steps within a grounded theory research study which starts with the research question and leads to multiple steps including recruitment and sampling of participants, data collection, initial coding, focused coding and categorization, theory building, and writing up the final theory with explanation. Throughout the steps involving data collection

and analysis, the researcher is expected to engage in memo writing, which is the ability to take information from coding data and use the information to compare data, explore ideas, and determine further data gathering (Charmaz, 2014). Another strategy that must happen throughout the initial coding and focused coding steps is constant comparative methods of raising questions and finding examples within or from the data. Although the steps presented by Charmaz (2014) appear to be linear steps, my expectation is that the process involved in grounded theory will consist of more looping cycles that will cause me to spend much of my time in the constant comparative strategies. My grounded theory research process is shown as the following:

Figure 3.1: Visual Representation of My Grounded Theory Process



One thing to note about my grounded theory process is that I used three data collection methods. The three data collection methods were to use online surveys, elite interviews, and field observations. All three data collection methods involved choosing the participants from the same sample of participants selected for the initial online survey. The triangulation of data collection methods and findings will allow the strengths of one method to offset the weaknesses of the others in order to gain a more comprehensive set of data (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). McMillan & Schumacher (2010) defines triangulation as “obtaining convergent data using cross validation” (p. 331). However, according to Maxwell (2013), the use of triangulation can serve the purpose of finding similarities to confirm a conclusion as well as to provide differing perspectives to create a more complex understanding towards the research question.

The second stage in my grounded theory process was to engage in initial coding. Maxwell (2013) suggests that before engaging in any coding, the first step is to read through the survey results, interview transcripts, and observations as well as listen to the interview recording, in order to write notes and develop tentative ideas for categories and relationships. Charmaz (2014) describes initial coding as “an initial phase involving naming each word, line, or segment of data” (p. 113) and to code using words that to reflect action rather than topics or themes. The initial coding and analysis of data from the online surveys affected the selection of participants for elite interviews and field observations as well as the development of questions for the elite interviews. As expected to occur as Charmaz (2014) presents, initial coding in all three data collection methods affected the focused coding and categorizing in the data analysis of each data collection method.

My entire grounded theory process was iterative, and overlapping of information from each stage in the process was inevitable. In the third stage of my grounded theory process, I

engaged in focused coding and categorizing. The data from online surveys, elite interviews, and field observations seemed like an immense amount even with the initial coding complete. I had to rely on repeated readings of the data and of the initial coding categories. I looked for connections between data and moved data between categories as well as removing and renaming categories. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) defines this constant comparison of data and categories as a “recursive process involving the repeated application of a category to fit coes and data segments” (p. 377). In order to understand my reflections during this time, I had to constantly check my memo-writing notes throughout the categorizing process; at times, my thoughts changed from what I had written in my notes because of new realizations of categories. Charmaz (2014) defines memo-writing as “the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers” (p. 162). By allowing myself to engage in memo-writing, I found that my ideas, thoughts, and questions about the data and perceived concepts could be written down right away and used to guide the coding and categorizing during data analysis. At first, I was uncertain how memo-writing would help me, even with the extensive explanation and examples Charmaz (2014) provided about how memo-writing should be done quickly without editing and used to guide early comparisons and make new ones. Eventually, I developed a system for memo-writing that included writing my notes right onto the particular document that triggered my thoughts or ideas. I found this way of memo-writing easier to track, because my notes were readily accessible when I needed them rather than looking through a notebook of compiled notes.

By using triangulation of data collection and findings, I hoped to have more validity in my findings that could be used for building a theory. The fourth stage of my grounded theory process involved comparing and contrasting the data from all three data collection methods along

with the findings and notes. After coding and categorizing of data, I looked for similarities and differences between the categories formed from the online surveys, the elite interviews, and the field observations. I put data side by side to determine which data was pertinent and which data was not, in order to investigate the categories and concepts that emerged. This strategy is identified by Charmaz (2014) as theoretical sampling, which has the main purpose to “saturate your categories with data and subsequently sort and/or diagram them to integrate your emerging theory” (pp. 192-193). It was challenging to continue to sort data and to continue to compare and contrast data within categories. I was unclear about whether I had reached the level of saturation required. According to Charmaz (2014), “categories are ‘saturated’ when gathering fresh data no longer sparks new theoretical insights, nor reveals new properties of these core theoretical categories” (p. 213). In order to organize my thoughts around new ideas and new insights, I wrote memos representing my thoughts, which later informed my writing of the data analysis and findings.

In the fifth stage of my grounded theory process, I was ready to start compiling all of my categories into themes that would help to build theories that could represent the findings as well as provide the culminating insight to answer my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* and to address my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. I was aware that, as the researcher, my background experiences, knowledge, and preferences could have been influencing factors in interpreting the data, categories, and themes. Engaging in constructivist grounded theory meant that the “design focuses on the perspectives, feelings, and beliefs of the

participants” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 347), however “a constructivist approach theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239), dependent on the researcher’s view. During theorizing, I wanted to make sure I was considering all of the fundamental ideas, the multitude of specific concepts that developed into abstract categories, and the extent of the experience. The main “acts involved in theorizing foster seeing possibilities, establishing connections, and asking questions” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 244). At this stage, I found myself questioning whether I may have missed any details or whether I may have misinterpreted any of the data, which was a normal effect of constructivist grounded theory. My ability to question how my biases and preferences could have affected the interpretation of the categories and theory was a good way to check the validity of my data.

In the final stage of my grounded theory process, I wrote several drafts of different parts of this chapter, Chapter Four, and Chapter Five. In the process of writing up the drafts, I found myself returning to review different segments within Chapter Two as well as to search for research that reinforced the concepts, categories, and themes that emerged. Each revision involved extensive rereading of what I had previously written in order to gain deeper insight into what I understand and how I can articulate my understanding clearly.

Knowing that the grounded theory process does not follow a linear scope and sequence but rather follows an iterative, cyclical, and overlapping process, I found it challenging to separate out and document in detail how every piece of data was moved or morphed throughout the process from data collection all the way through to the final theory building. The rest of this chapter describes the main discoveries throughout the grounded theory process as they developed

from pertinent data. I was diligent in trying to explain the significant discoveries and important data that were important to include within this chapter and Chapter Four.

Setting and Participants

My data collection began with a survey given to school principals to gain further perspectives and to develop the most appropriate set of questions for interviews. The surveys were given to a larger number of participants in order to gain data that would be more valid in showing any variations or trends in responses. The criteria for survey participant selection and method for conducting the survey is described further in the section The Survey and Survey Participants. After analyzing responses from surveys, I selected the top participants from the surveys for elite interviews. The criteria for selection of elite interview participants is described further in the section Elite Interviews. My expectation was to have three elite interviews, however only two participants agreed to the interviews. The questions for the interviews were crafted based on the trend in responses from the surveys. The interviews provided another layer of data that informed the phenomenon further. Additional data was gathered through field observations at two schools focusing on the physical environment within the front entrance and office areas and brief interactions among students and staff. The observation protocol and criteria for selection of observation settings is described further in the section Focused Observations. These observations were expected to occur with the two schools of the selected principals of the elite interviews. It should be noted that much of the interviews, analyzing of data during initial coding and focused coding simultaneously occurred. Throughout the data collection, initial coding of surveys, interviews, and observations, I wrote notes and continued to jot analytical data that informed the process of coding and categorizing at various points. Charmaz (2014) considers this as expected actions since much of grounded theory relies on the

notion that “participants’ implicit meanings, experiential views - and researchers’ finished grounded theories - are constructions of reality” (p. 17).

The Survey and Survey Participants

The initial data collection consisted of a survey sent to twelve elementary principals of schools surrounding a metro area in the midwest. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) describe using surveys as low-cost and “popular because credible information from a large population can be collected” (p. 236). Additionally, surveys are efficient and data can be collected on many variables. The important factors involved in using surveys as an initial data collection method are defined purpose, selected target participants, and clear instructions (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). It is also important to make sure that the survey will provide reliable and valid results. Reliable survey results provide consistent information and valid survey results produce accurate information (Fink, 2013).

The survey was distributed to twelve elementary principals in selected schools across six different school districts in urban and suburban areas within the midwest. Participants in the survey were all principals or school leaders who have the organizational and instructional leadership of their schools. The schools were chosen for survey participation based on the information found in their school missions and visions, or their school descriptions. I looked for information that included developing students as leaders or developing the social emotional skills of students. Each of the twelve elementary schools have school web pages that contain references to student leadership as a part of their school culture. Five of the schools selected for the survey are currently implementing *The Leader in Me* as their framework for teaching leadership skills for academic and social emotional learning (Covey, Covey, Summers, & Hatch, 2014). The remaining schools were selected based on the online missions and visions or

descriptions on their websites related to developing students with high positive character including: respect, responsibility, collaboration, innovation, and challenge. Academic achievement, student behavior referral rates, student suspension rates, school attendance rates, or other school measurement factors used in school accountability ratings were not used in filtering for eligible participating schools. Each of the schools selected is described below with identifying criteria showing the focus on building student social emotional skills or leadership skills. For purposes of keeping the identity of schools anonymous, school names were removed and replaced with “School #”.

School 1: This school is a public charter school in a midwestern suburb and has clear descriptions of the school focus on leadership. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found within the description of the school as “...the principles and skills taught at [School 1] are a better indicator for lifelong success than GPA alone”.

School 2: This school is a public charter school and is described as a Montessori school located in a midwestern urban city and the evidence of social emotional learning was found within the school vision statement as “Our students will develop the character strengths, social and emotional skills, creativity, passion for learning and college preparatory academic capabilities that will enable them to lead lives of joy and purpose”.

School 3: This school is a magnet school within a larger public school district and is located in a midwestern urban city. This school has a focus on gifted and talented programming. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or leadership was found in the online description which stated, “Our school challenges all students by building on their strengths, interests, and passions”.

School 4: This school, located in a midwestern suburb, is part of a larger public school district and currently implements *The Leader in Me* and the evidence of social emotional learning and/or leadership was found in part of the school's mission statement as "...educate the mind and heart of each student in a safe and positive environment with shared, active, and meaningful learning through careful planning and an emphasis on community partnership and the practice and application of ethical values."

School 5: This school, located in a midwestern suburb, is part of a larger public school district and currently implements *The Leader in Me* and the evidence of social emotional learning and/or leadership was succinctly stated in the school mission as "Wonder, Explore, Create and Lead".

School 6: This school is a magnet school located in a midwestern urban city and is part of a larger public school district. This school has a focus on aerospace programming. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the description of the school as "The Home of Future Leaders".

School 7: This school, located in a midwestern urban city, is one of two public charter schools that have the same programming towards leadership. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the description of the school as "Growing Learners, Growing Leaders".

School 8: This school, located in a midwestern urban city, is the second of two public charter schools that have the same programming towards leadership. Like the other school, the evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the description of the school as "Growing Learners, Growing Leaders".

School 9: This school is located in a midwestern urban city and is a public charter school. This school has a focus on leadership and the evidence of social emotional learning and/or student

leadership was found in the vision statement as “Our program will assist and challenge youth to live their lives with the highest level of authenticity, integrity, and courage”.

School 10: This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is part of a larger public school district. This school currently implements *The Leader in Me* and the evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the description of the school as “...we empower all students to achieve and inspire life-long learning through high expectations, collaboration, and respect”.

School 11: This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is part of a larger public school district. This school currently implements *The Leader in Me* and the evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the description of the school as “A caring community where leaders and learners are one”.

School 12: This school, located in a midwestern suburb, is a public charter school focused on leadership. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the vision statement as “...where students and graduates become exceptional leaders, and are prepared to take on the academic and leadership challenges they will face as they transition into high school”.

In addition to the twelve schools selected for sending surveys, there were three schools that were included in the initial list of schools that had evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership. Since my first step towards sending surveys to the schools was to make contact with the principals in the schools through telephone or email, I was not able to make contact with the principals and was not able to obtain valid email addresses for the principals of these three schools. Therefore, these three schools were excluded from the

distribution of surveys. For the purpose of keeping these schools unidentified, the school names were replaced with School 13, School 14, and School 15.

School 13: This is a public charter school in a midwestern urban city and is currently implementing *The Leader in Me*. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the mission statement as “Mutual respect, trust, and responsibility”. A survey was not sent to the principal in this school.

School 14: This school is a public charter school located in a midwestern urban city. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the school’s description as “A good education is more than the basic curriculum - it’s relationships, opportunities and experiences that prepare students for what they’ll need to succeed in college, work and life”. A survey was not sent to the principal in this school.

School 15: This school is a public charter school located in a midwestern urban city. The evidence of social emotional learning and/or student leadership was found in the school’s mission statement as “...seeks to prepare students for successful and productive lives as United States citizens while allowing them to retain their unique cultural heritage”. A survey was not sent to the principal in this school.

The survey was created in Google Forms and was comprised of questions based on CASEL’s School Theory of Action for Systemic SEL and the five competencies of social emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2012). The questions were intended to be directed at the school leaders of each school to gain further information about the implementation of each school’s social emotional learning and/or leadership framework. It was assumed that each principal or school leader who responded to the survey would respond based on their perception

of implementation process, roles, and outcomes. Designing the survey to provide accurate perception data required consideration of the word meanings within question items, the intent and desired overall information, the timeline and feasibility of completing the survey, the usefulness of gathered survey results, and the type of question for each item (Fink, 2013).

Since the survey was distributed to school principals in an online format, the survey was designed to gather quick perception data through carefully worded questions and a clear introduction of the survey. The introduction of the survey gave a brief overview of the intent of the survey as well as disclaimers of confidentiality. The introduction of the survey can be found along with the survey in the Appendix.

As Fink (2013) and McMillan & Schumacher (2010) described, the online survey format was carefully organized so that each page consisted of only one or a few short questions that would not involve much scrolling and a progress bar appeared on each page to inform the respondent of their progress towards completion of the survey. There were a total of 17 pages shown on the screen for respondents and the progress bar at the bottom along with *back* and *next* buttons for respondents to navigate the pages. Besides the first five identification questions on page one, many of the pages consisted of one or two questions only.

The survey began with identification question items (Items #1-6) and continued into Likert-style questions (Items #7-19). The Likert-style questions used a 5-point scale and the intention was to create a continuous scale between the two ending extremes. In considering whether to use a 4-point scale, which would be a forced-choice method, or a 5-point scale, which would provide a middle or neutral category, I opted to use a 5-point scale in order to allow respondents to quickly and instinctively choose a category based on their perceptions.

According to Fink (2013), using a forced-choice 4-point scale may annoy respondents and may not actually show the truth about their perceptions.

Questions #1-6 were identification questions that would provide context for the remaining questions on the survey. The question items were as follows:

1. What is your school's name? (open ended)
2. What is your first and last name? (open ended)
3. What is your title or position? (Choose one: Principal, Assistant Principal, Executive Director, Director, Board Member (or Chair), Other)
4. How many years are you in your current position? (Choose one: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, 10 or more years)
5. How many total years have you worked in this school? (Choose one: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, 10 or more years)
6. Which of the following initiatives does your school use to address students' social emotional learning? (Choose all that apply: Caring School Community (CSC), MindUP, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, Raising Healthy Children, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, Responsive Classroom, Second Step, Steps to Respect, The Leader in Me, Other)

Questions #7 and #8 were based on the five competencies of social emotional learning and CASEL's School Theory of Action for Systemic SEL (CASEL, 2012). The question items were as follows:

7. On a five-point scale (where 5 is "very important" and 1 is "not at all important"), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to learn about the following aspects of social

and emotional learning at your school? (Each item with a scale: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making)

8. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to learn about the following aspects of social and emotional learning at your school? (Each item with a scale: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making)

Questions #9 and #10 were based on six competencies identified by Steinberg and Li (2014) with direct correlation to Covey’s (2004) seven habits of highly effective people.

9. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to learn about the following aspects of leadership skills at your school? (Each item with a scale: Collaboration in Diverse Settings, Critical Thinking towards Problem Solving, Creativity with Innovation, Communication, Personal Management for Well-Being, Social, Global, Cultural, and Environmental Responsibility)
10. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to learn about the following aspects of leadership skills at your school? (Each item with a scale: Collaboration in Diverse Settings, Critical Thinking towards Problem Solving, Creativity with Innovation, Communication, Personal Management for Well-Being, Social, Global, Cultural, and Environmental Responsibility)

Questions #11 to #15 were aimed at collecting perceptions that influence the visions and practices towards social emotional learning and student leadership.

11. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel a clear vision for social emotional learning and student leadership is established with all stakeholders at your school? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)
12. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel an implementation plan has been developed to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)
13. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel ongoing professional development has been provided to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)
14. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel school-wide policies are integrated in school activities to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)
15. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel data on school climate and student social emotional competence is used to guide the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)

In questions #16 to #19, respondents were asked about perceptions that influence the outcomes of social emotional learning and student leadership.

16. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to experience the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership at your school? (Each item with a scale: Students are connected to other students, students are connected to adults, students are supported, students are challenged, students are given leadership opportunities)
17. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel STUDENTS experience the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership at your school? (Each item with a scale: Students are connected to other students, students are connected to adults, students are supported, students are challenged, students are given leadership opportunities)
18. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school? (Each item with a scale: Student-centered teaching and learning strategies, culturally and linguistically responsive strategies, differentiated tasks and activities, varied student leadership opportunities)
19. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel TEACHERS use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school? (Each item with a scale: Student-centered teaching and learning strategies, culturally and linguistically responsive strategies, differentiated tasks and activities, varied student leadership opportunities)

The survey ended with two open-ended questions (Items #20-21) asking participants to describe the school’s role in developing student leadership using one statement and one example.

20. What is one statement you would say about what the school's role is in developing leadership in students? (Open Ended Text Box)

21. What is one example of a school practice that supports your statement above? (Open Ended Text Box)

Before sending the survey to principals, I first attempted to contact each principal through telephone to inform them of my study. Then, I sent an email with a reference to the telephone conversation or the attempted phone contact, information about my study, a request to complete the survey, a link to the survey, a statement that they may be contacted to participate further in the research, and a statement that they may refuse or opt out of the study at any time.

My initial email with the request to complete the surveys gave survey participants a one-week time frame to complete the surveys. I found that the return rate after one week was very low at only two out of twelve completions. I decided to contact the remaining ten principals with another email stating my name, information about my study, a request to complete the survey, a link to the survey, a statement that they may be contacted to participate further in the research, and a statement that they may refuse or opt out of the study at any time. I provided another week as a time frame for completion. After this second email, I received seven more survey completions by the end of the second week deadline. My overall response rate for the surveys was at 75% with nine out of twelve schools responding.

After the surveys were completed, the results of the surveys were analyzed to inform the selection of principals for the elite interviews and the questions for the elite interviews. The results and analysis of the surveys are described further in Chapter 4 along with the data showing the selection of the principals for the elite interviews.

Elite Interviews

After gathering and analyzing the data from the surveys, I conducted elite interviews to obtain further information from a select few participants who showed highest results on the surveys. In elite interviews, participants are prominent figures, very familiar with their organizations, and have a great deal of knowledge about the topic of the conversation so they are able to use their knowledge to provide meaningful insight into the broad areas of the topic (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Selected participants for the elite interviews, who had previously completed the online survey, were made aware that they may be contacted for further participation in the research.

Participants were selected for elite interviews based on the overall quantitative average of their answers from all the Likert-style items on the survey (Items #7-19). The 5-point scale of the online surveys were continuous scales between two extreme ends. Each category was numbered 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 and the responses from respondents were used to determine group average ratings for the entire group of respondents as well as the individual average rating for each respondent. In order to select the individual participants for the elite interviews, each respondent's total average was calculated for questions #7 to #19 and then ranked in order from highest to lowest total average. There were three respondents with total averages higher than the other respondents. Since I used a 5-point Likert scale in the online survey and the questions were intended to capture the perception of principals, I expected many of the individual total averages to be above 4.0. I discovered that the range of total average for respondents was from a lowest of 4.1 to a highest of 4.8. After ranking the individual respondent total averages, the top three respondents had total averages above 4.6. The group average ratings and selected

individual participant average ratings are described in further detail in Chapter Four. However, the selected elite interview participants are described below.

Elite Interviewee A: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.8, which was the highest average of all the participants. This elite interviewee has been the principal at his school between four to six years but has been a principal for over ten years. This school is a school in a larger public school district in a midwestern urban city. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee B: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.62, which was the third highest average. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school for over ten years and has been a principal for over 10 years. This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is a public charter school. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee C: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.66, which was the second highest average. This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is part of a larger school district. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school between one to three years and has worked as a principal for one to three years. In the response ratings for all of the question items in #7-#19, the ratings by this respondent were almost all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective. Only one question item received a rating of 3 but the overall average was still second highest because of more occurrences of 5 ratings on many of the question items.

Selected elite interviewees were contacted by telephone and email for further involvement in the research. I made contact with all three of the selected elite interviewees, but only Elite Interviewee A and Elite Interviewee B were willing to participate in the interviews. Elite Interviewee C was not able to participate in the interview with me, however, she gave consent for me to observe interactions and artifacts during student arrival time within her school, which is explained further in the Focused Observations section. Even with two out of the three elite interviewees, I felt I would gain enough perspectives and qualitative data to compare with the survey data and focused observation data.

Upon agreement to participate in the elite interview, selected participants received a Letter of Informed Consent for Interview through email as we scheduled the interviews. Both elite interviewees preferred to schedule the interviews within their schools and reserved time in their schedules to meet with me during their work days. In setting up the interviews, I kept in mind that interviews in grounded theory research are open-ended as the interviewer learns as much as possible about the perceptions and experiences of the participants as related to a possible theory (Charmaz, 2014; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). The responses from the open-ended questions were coded to produce the themes for some of the questions to be used in the elite interviews. The interviews focused on elaborating on the perceptions of principals and gathering information on the practices and strategies used to obtain a student leadership-based school culture. The interview questions were developed to focus upon my primary research question *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, and my secondary research questions *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?* *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about*

student leadership?, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

In developing the interview questions, conducting the interviews, and analyzing the interview results, I needed to be aware of my biases and ensure that my biases did not affect the overall qualitative design as Kvale & Brinkman (2009) states, “interview research is saturated with moral and ethical issues” (p. 62). I have a strong bias in favor of developing student leadership in the elementary and secondary schools, so I needed to make sure that my questions did not reflect my bias. Instead, I ensured that my questions were developed based on the gathered results from the surveys and did not portray my favor towards student leadership. To develop my interview questions, I focused on the themes that were exhibited by my primary and secondary research questions and then created interviewer questions that were expressed in simpler and more specific language; this was done to provide thematic knowledge through a dynamically natural conversation flow (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009). Furthermore, each interview question was phrased as an open-ended question in order to allow for a variety of responses. The questions were also varied between ‘what’, ‘why’, and ‘how’ questions with the ‘why’ questions towards the end of the interview, as Kvale & Brinkman (2009) suggested.

The first three interview questions were meant to elicit descriptions and perceptions of student leadership from the principals’ perspectives. These three questions provided a launching point for the principals to ground themselves in their roles as principals and then their perception of their school communities and structures. Principals were able to describe the school climate and culture with tangible examples. The first three questions were aimed at gathering insight towards my secondary question, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*. The questions used in the interviews were:

1. As a principal, describe your role in this school?
2. How would you describe what people might feel or see in this school?
3. How do you define student leadership?

The next three questions used in the elite interviews were intended to probe further into the school principals' understanding of how the school impacts student leadership. Principals were asked these questions to gain insight into their perceptions as related to another secondary question, *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*. The questions used in the interviews were:

4. What is the school's role in developing student leadership?
5. In your opinion, how does developing leadership in students impact their character development?
6. What leadership skills do you feel are most important for students to learn?

The next questions addressed the third of my secondary questions, *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. Question #7 was developed after the idea of connecting students to the community was revealed as an important school-wide practice within the online survey results. Since much of what principals reported within the online survey involved specific programs they had within their schools yet the ideas of providing opportunities and connecting students to the community were broader ideas, I wanted to probe further into these broader ideas to find reasons why these ideas were important. The questions used in the interview were:

7. Some principals believe that developing leadership in students involves providing opportunities and connecting students to the community, why do you think principals believe this?

8. What are some specific school-wide practices that have supported leadership in students?

The last question of the interview was a broader question to gain further insight into the reasons why the school principals believe in what they are doing. This last question was an indirect connection to my primary question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*. In order to answer this question, I expected school principals to express what was within their core beliefs about student leadership and how they maintained their core beliefs. The question used in the interview was:

9. What is your vision for this school and what drives you towards that vision?

Engagement in the interview was essential. Even though my questions were arranged to allow for a natural flow of conversation, it was important to maintain interaction that was emotionally neutral and cognitively stimulating (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). In order to sustain an engaging conversation without appearing adversarial, I refrained from asking too many probing questions and paced the interview so that the interviewees had the freedom to answer as brief or as long as they chose. I did use supportive and recognition statements when interviewees showed body language that I interpreted as needing assurance and recognition. In following these actions and intentions during the interviews, the interviews maintained a conversational tone and conveyed acceptance so that interviewees could elaborate on their responses with examples and explanations (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Upon completion of the interviews, I transcribed the interviews into written form from the audio recording and then reviewed my written notes regarding gestures, setting, and overall comfort level of the interviewees. Some of the observations I made during the interview were jotted down to specify when interviewees answered questions in a more relaxed and seated

position or a more forward and tense position. I share these observations in more detail along with further information regarding the analysis of the interview notes and transcriptions in Chapter Four.

Field Observations

The third data collection method of my research was to conduct observations. Although I was engaged in what McMillan & Schumacher (2010) identifies as field observations, because I needed to be onsite in order to take field notes, I did not observe over multiple times within each observation site. In the observations, the purpose of the observations was to gather what artifacts and interactions were present in the front entrance area that would display the school's climate and culture as well as the overall efforts and focus of the principal (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009; Muhammad, 2011; Spiro, 2013). I did not feel that the artifacts and physical environment would change daily or even often enough to observe multiple times at each site. My objective was to be a nonparticipant, and my intention was to gather notes on the interactions between the students and staff, as well as the physical and emotional environment in the front entrance area of the school, without interfering with the natural behaviors and setting. McMillan & Schumacher (2010) presents that observations are most reliable when done by a complete observer, which means that my role was "to remain detached from the group or process" (p. 208). As a nonparticipant or complete observer, I needed to refrain from making inferences or judgment of what I observed so that I was able to collect data that was not affected by my presence, interactions with students and staff, or assumptions. Although I was not able to note verbal, nonverbal, and tacit knowledge as McMillan & Schumacher (2010) explain as a benefit of being a participant observer, I did feel that my role as a non-participant observer provided me with the authentic and untainted data I needed to understand the school culture and climate from

an outsider's perspective. Using low-inference observation, I was intentional about setting aside all biases to watch and listen nonjudgmentally during the observation because "to listen intently requires the researcher to put aside his or her own thoughts and seek first those of the participants" (McMillan & Schumacher, p. 352, 2010), or in this case, to observe without judgment so that my data would be more reliable.

The selection of the observation sites was the same process as the selection of interviewees. Based on the survey ratings and responses, three school sites emerged as having the highest ratings on the online survey rating questions. These three school sites were sites in which the top three respondents on the online survey served as principals. When I contacted each principal to seek participation in the interviews, I also asked for permission to observe interactions and environment in the front entrance and hallways. I made contact with each principal through telephone and email and maintained contact using email to communicate my purpose for the observation. In my request for the observations, I explained to each participant that my observation would be 15-20 minutes within the front entrance and front hallway areas of the school. I also explained that I would observe interactions between staff and students and artifacts on hallway walls. I made sure to express that any identifying information about students, staff, and the school site would be used in the final writing. Two of the principals allowed me to observe unattended; one of the principals did not allow observations but provided a guided tour of the building instead. Hence, I conducted field observations within the schools of Interviewee A and Interviewee C. Interviewee B provided me with a guided tour of the school site, but I did not spend any unattended time in the school entrance or hallways to collect any observation notes and data. Although Interviewee C did not participate in the elite interviews, the field observation within her school provided valuable information regarding the environment

of the school culture and climate. Interviewee C was hospitable in allowing me to see any part of the building and at any time of the day. The observation sites are identified as Field Observation A and Field Observation C with more details regarding the location and time of observations as follows:

Field Observation A: This field observation occurred within 20 minutes prior to the scheduled interview with Interviewee A from 1:00-1:20, which was in the middle of the school day.

During this field observation, data was gathered by jotting notes of who was in the entrance and office areas of the school, the interactions between staff and students in the office and entrance area, and types of artifacts on the walls of the entrance and office areas.

Field Observation C: This field observation occurred within 20 minutes at the beginning of the school day from 8:25-8:55. The observation began right at the school start time and continued for 20 minutes after the school bell rang. The areas involved in the observation were the entrance and office areas of the school. I observed and jotted notes involving the interactions between staff and students as well as types of artifacts on the walls.

Although Interviewee B provided a tour of the front areas of the building, I did not record observations of interactions or artifacts and did not include this school site in the field observations. I did not feel the tour would have provided the same level of authenticity in observations of interactions and artifacts. Analysis and findings from the field observations are shared in further detail in Chapter Four.

Summary

Learning about the school principal's perception of the school's role in developing student leadership will provide further insight into the role of school leadership and its impact on school culture. The specific school culture component being focused on is student leadership,

but the perceptions from the principals are what can determine how well the school embraces a student leadership-based culture. For this study, I used three different data collection methods in order to triangulate the data and make data more comprehensive. Maxwell (2013) presents three purposes for using multiple data collection. One purpose is using triangulation as a way to use the different methods to check on the strengths and limitations of the data. Another purpose is to obtain more information on the different aspects of my primary and secondary questions that may lead to other aspects. The third purpose is to gain a deeper understanding of my primary and secondary questions through different perspectives. Analyzing the results from the surveys provided a deeper study into the reported perceptions and beliefs. Expanding further upon the survey results through qualitative methods means that I needed to continually assess how my qualitative methods were working and adjusted when needed (Maxwell, 2013). By using a grounded theory design involving survey, interviews, and observations, I was able to learn as much as I could from the participants and their natural settings through what they conveyed verbally and nonverbally about their perceptions. All of this data was essential in determining explanations for my primary question, *How do elementary school principals describe the school's role in developing leadership in students?*. In the spirit of grounded theory, I was also keen on finding explanations to my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*, *How beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

In Chapter Four, the research findings from the survey, interviews, and observations are presented along with the notes and discoveries during data collection, initial coding, and focused coding stages of my research. Charmaz (2014) refers to the use of memo-writing as an effective

way to make and use analytical notes during each stage of conducting grounded theory. I present my discovering from memo-writing and my categories from coding as well as the beginning of my theory building in Chapter Four before sharing my reflection of the theory that emerged in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 4

In the last analysis, what we are communicating far more eloquently than anything we say or do.

- Stephen Covey

Overview of Research and Organization of Findings

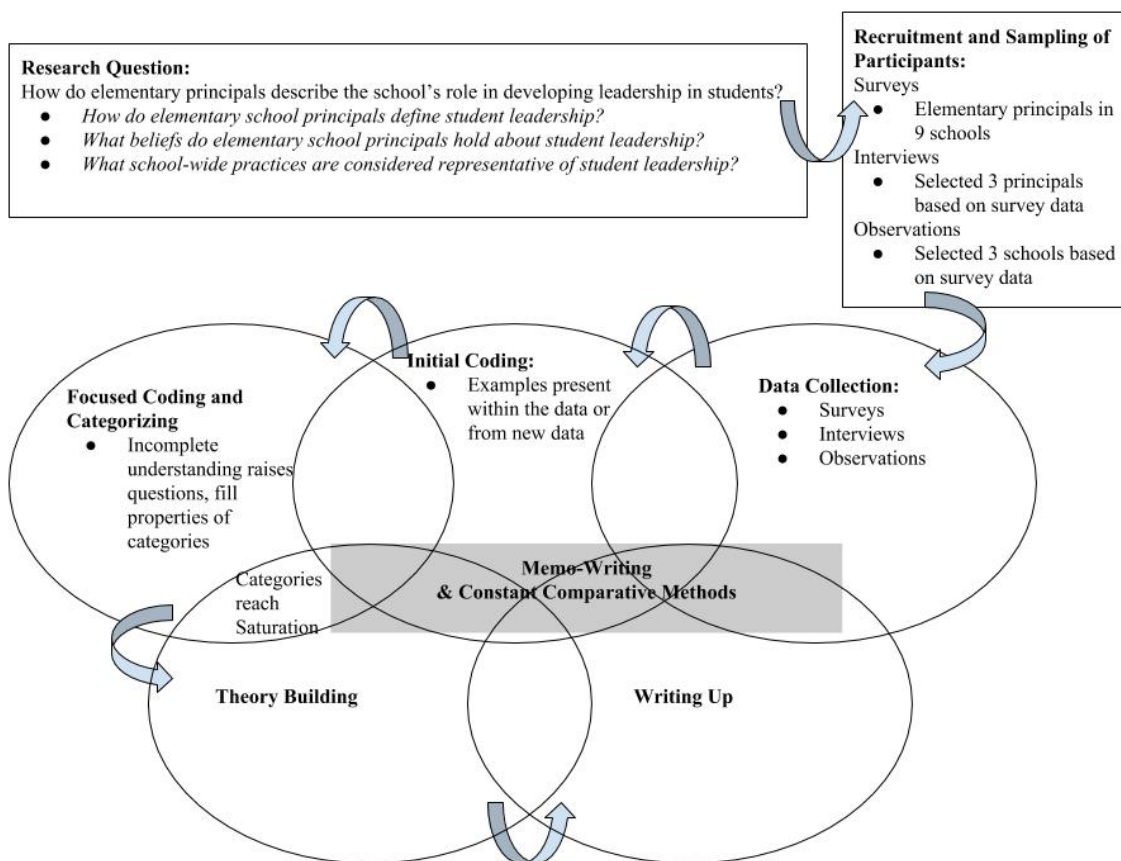
The purpose of this study was to inquire deeper into the perspectives of elementary school principals about developing leadership in students. My research question was *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* I also wanted to gather further information and insights from school leaders to address my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. All of these questions drove much of the research process and were critical in the data analysis stages.

This chapter describes the data collection methods, the data analysis stages, and the summary of findings. The data collection methods included a selection of schools within a large midwestern metro area that either portrayed social emotional learning or student leadership as important characteristics. The principals in these schools were invited to complete a survey. After the survey, three elementary principals were selected to participate in an interview, of which two principals ended up being interviewed. Finally, three schools were selected from the results of the online survey for on-site observations of interactions and artifacts in the entrance and office areas of the building. Of the three selected school sites, two sites gave permission for field observations, which allowed me to be a non-participant observer. The three data collection methods allowed me to triangulate my data findings, which provided more comprehensive and

valid data and findings because strengths from one data collection could make up for weaknesses in the other (Maxwell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

In order to maintain focus and consistency in the data collection and analysis, I referred to my visual representation of the grounded theory process as adapted from Charmaz (2014). My visual representation provided me with clarity around how my data collection methods, initial coding, and focused coding would inform the development of theory. It also reminded me of the self-accountability involved in memo-writing in order to see the interception of ideas and data emerging from each of the stages of the grounded theory process. As a reference, my grounded theory process is presented here.

Figure 3.1: Visual Representation of My Grounded Theory Process

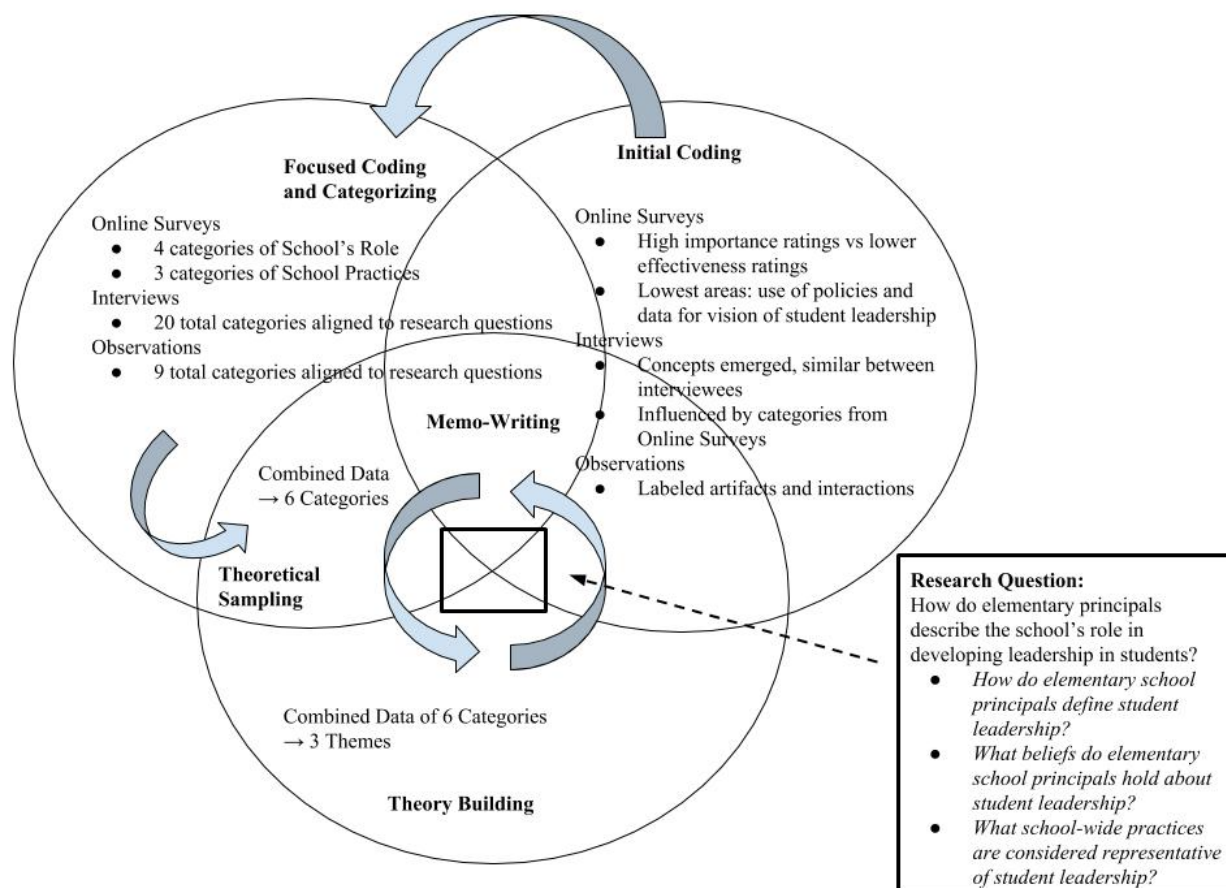


The data analysis stages within my grounded theory process included a series of comparative and overlapping procedures. Charmaz (2014) and Maxwell (2013) explained the data analysis of grounded theory to include a sequence beginning with initial coding to focused coding before moving on to theoretical sampling to end with finding themes for constructing theories. I found that I engaged in data analysis using each of the stages but it was not in a linear sequence. Each stage overlapped with the previous stage and the next stage, which made data from each stage simultaneously dependent on discoveries from the previous stage and affecting the next stage.

While memo-writing is suggested by Charmaz (2014) to be highly crucial to the grounded theory process because it helps the researcher focus on and explore new ideas, I found memo-writing to help me organize emerging ideas through using quick-writes on post-it notes that I could move and attach to various stages and ideas through the grounded theory process. The notes from my memo-writing are integrated throughout the sections and subsections in this chapter.

With three sets of data for the data collection methods, engaging in triangulation of data and noticing when data showed similarities or differences enhanced the validity of the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). By triangulating data, I was able to compare data from the online survey to the interviews and then from the observations back to the interviews and online surveys. Also, since data collection from interviews and observations depended on the data from the online survey, it was inevitable that the data would reflect similarities in categories. My data analysis stages with notes on what I discovered during each stage is shown in the following figure.

Figure 4.1: Data Analysis Stages



Throughout the data analysis stages, I kept my research questions at the center to remain focused and to remind myself to code freely and to let categories emerge but through focused coding and categorizing and then through theoretical sampling, I would need to combine and synthesize in order to reach categories that would develop into themes. In the rest of this chapter, I present information on the data collection methods, significant findings from each of the data collection methods, and the categories that emerged from the initial coding and focused coding of each of the data collection methods. The initial coding and focused coding stages were handwritten, using highlighting and colored pens so the papers were a colorful mess. However,

the findings from each data collection method that are presented in this chapter are neatly organized to show the significant findings and categories.

The findings from each of the data collection methods, including discoveries from data analysis, memo-writing, coding, and categorizing were then used in the final data analysis stage of theoretical sampling. The section summarizing the categories from all three data collection methods consists of my processes and reflections regarding theoretical sampling and what it entailed to reach a level of saturation as Charmaz (2014) would argue as reaching a level at which “you have defined, checked, and explained relationships between categories and the range of variation within and between your categories” (p. 213). Through sharing the findings from each of the data collection methods, my hope is that triangulation, as a strategy, prevented me from making conclusions reflecting biases from one method and allowed me “to gain a more secure understanding of the issues [I was] investigating” (Maxwell, p. 102, 2013).

Analysis and Summary of Survey Findings

The survey was the first data gathering point in which a wider selection of principals was surveyed for responses towards broader perceptions of social emotional learning and student leadership. The questions in the survey were based on CASEL’s School Theory of Action for Systemic SEL and the five competencies of social emotional learning: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making (CASEL, 2012). The survey began with identification question items (Items #1-6) and continued into Likert-style questions (Items #7-19). Question #7 and #8 were based on the five competencies of social emotional learning and CASEL’s School Theory of Action for Systemic SEL (CASEL, 2012). Questions #9 and #10 were based on six competencies identified by Steinberg and Li (2014) with direct correlation to the 7 habits of highly effective people (Covey, 2004).

Questions #11 to #15 are aimed at collecting perceptions that influence the visions and practices towards social emotional learning and student leadership. In questions #16 to #19, respondents were asked about perceptions that influence the outcomes of social emotional learning and student leadership. The survey ended with two open-ended questions (Items #20-21) asking participants to describe the school's role in developing student leadership using one statement and one example. A summary of responses and a description of the data analysis are shared for each survey question.

Responses and Descriptions of Data Analysis by Question

Identification Question Items

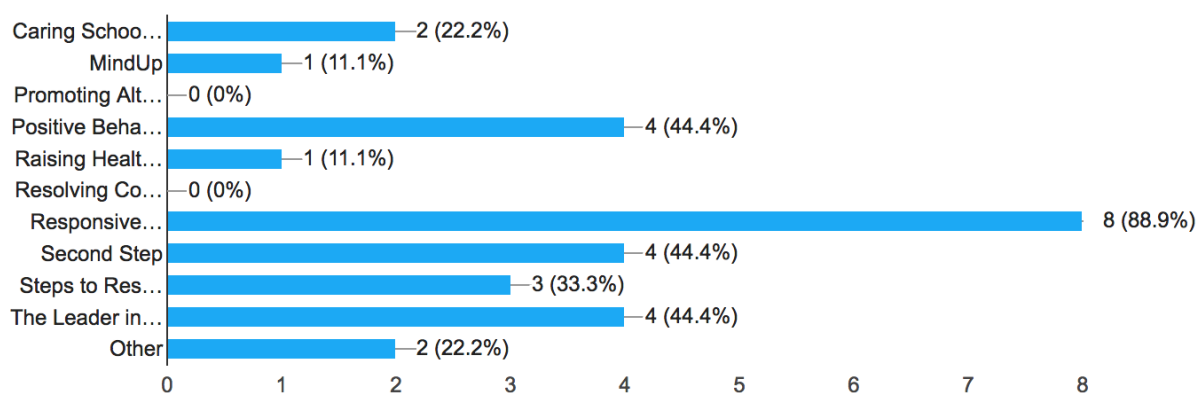
Questions #1 through #6 were identification questions that provided context for the remaining questions on the survey. A summary of responses is provided for each question along with the response rate and concepts gained from the responses.

1. What is your school's name? (open ended): There were a total of twelve surveys distributed. Six surveys were distributed to public charter schools and six surveys were distributed to traditional public schools that were part of larger public school districts. Of the twelve surveys distributed, nine surveys were completed, which was a 75% response rate. There were four surveys completed by public charter schools and 5 surveys completed by schools belonging to larger public school districts. The completed surveys provided a balance between perceptions from principals of public charter schools and schools within a larger public school district. All nine respondents completed this question with a response of their schools' names.
2. What is your first and last name? (open ended): Each of the nine school leaders or principals provided his or her name.

3. What is your title or position? (Choose one: Principal, Assistant Principal, Executive Director, Director, Board Member (or Chair), Other): All nine completed surveys provided a response to this question. There were 88.9% (8 respondents) who responded as Principal and 11.1% (1 respondent) who responded as Executive Director.
4. How many years are you in your current position? (Choose one: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, 10 or more years): All nine completed surveys provided a response to this question. There was an equal 33.3 % (3 respondents) distribution of respondents in the 1-3 years, 4-6 years, and 10 or more years. No respondents reported being in the 7-9 years cluster.
5. How many total years have you worked in this school? (Choose one: 1-3 years, 4-6 years, 7-9 years, 10 or more years). All nine completed surveys provided a response to this question. There were 33.3% (3 respondents) in the 1-3 years cluster, 44.4% (4 respondents) in the 4-6 years cluster, and 22.2% (2 respondents) in the 10 or more years cluster. No respondents reported being in the 7-9 years cluster.
6. Which of the following initiatives does your school use to address students' social emotional learning? (Choose all that apply: Caring School Community (CSC), MindUP, Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Positive Behavior Intervention Supports, Raising Healthy Children, Resolving Conflict Creatively Program, Responsive Classroom, Second Step, Steps to Respect, The Leader in Me, Other): Respondents could choose any of the options available for this question. The initiative that was indicated as being used most for addressing students' social emotional learning was Responsive Classroom at 88.9% or eight out of nine respondents reported. The second most used initiative to address social emotional learning was evenly tied between Positive

Behavior Intervention Supports, Second Step, and The Leader in Me. The following chart provides a visual of how often each of the named initiatives was reported as being used to address social emotional learning.

Chart 4.1: Reported Use of Social Emotional Learning Programs



Rating Questions on Components of Social Emotional Learning

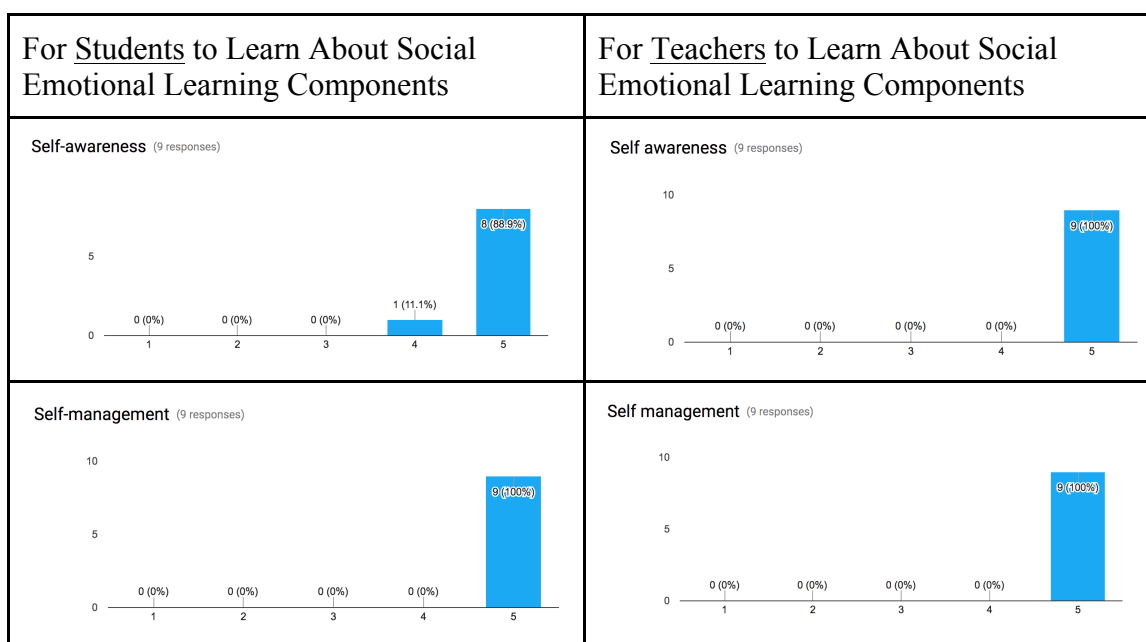
There are five competencies of social emotional learning as identified by CASEL (2012) and those five competencies are self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making. Questions #7 and #8 were aimed at gathering the perceptions of principals on how important they felt students and teachers should learn about the five competencies of social emotional learning and CASEL's School Theory of Action for Systemic SEL (CASEL, 2012).

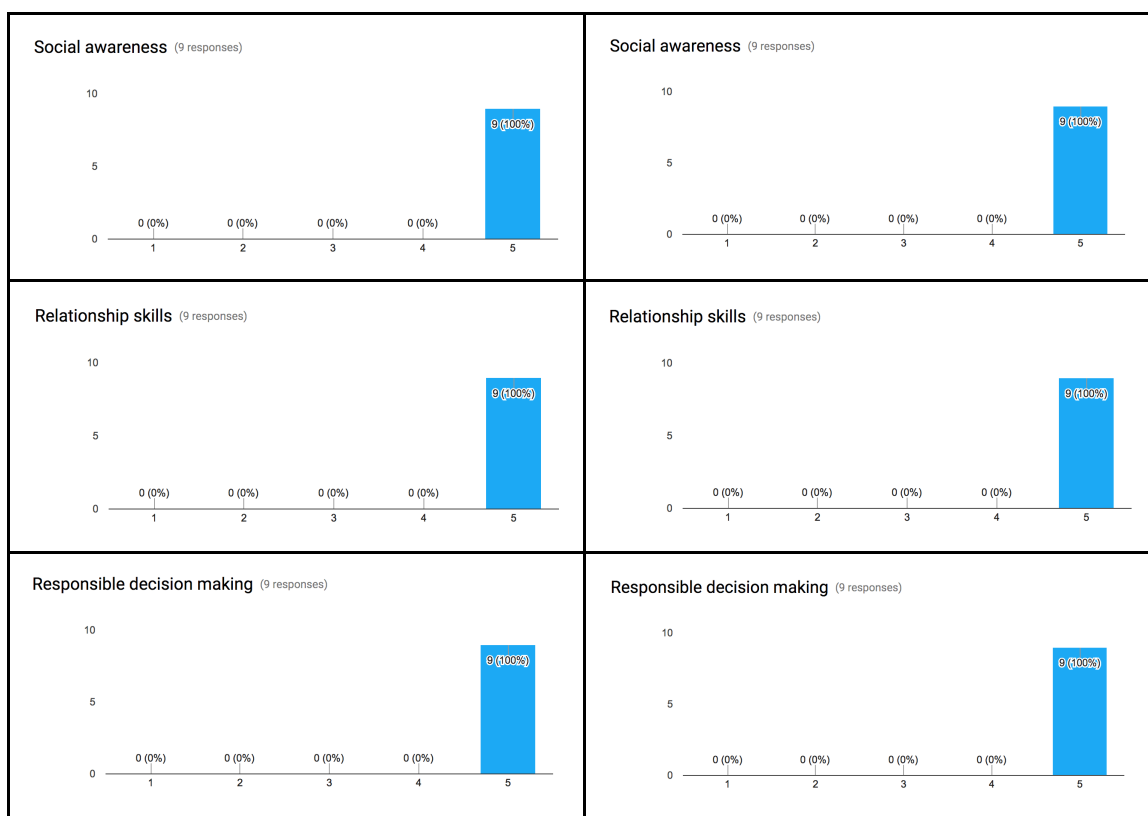
7. On a five-point scale (where 5 is "very important" and 1 is "not at all important"), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to learn about the following aspects of social and emotional learning at your school? (Each item with a scale: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making): All nine respondents reported each item to be important or very important for students to learn. Every respondent rating each item as a 5 "very important" except for one item,

social awareness, that was rated as a 4 by one respondent. Overall the high response for each item in this question signifies that principals feel it is very important for students to learn each of the components of social emotional learning.

8. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to learn about the following aspects of social and emotional learning at your school? (Each item with a scale: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making): All nine respondents reported that it was very important for teachers to learn about each of the items listed, with a rating of 5 “very important” for each of the components. The following chart shows that there is very little to no difference between the perception from principals between what they believe is important for students and teachers to learn about in regards to the five components of social emotional learning.

Chart 4.2: Students vs. Teachers in Learning SEL Components





Rating Questions on Components of Student Leadership

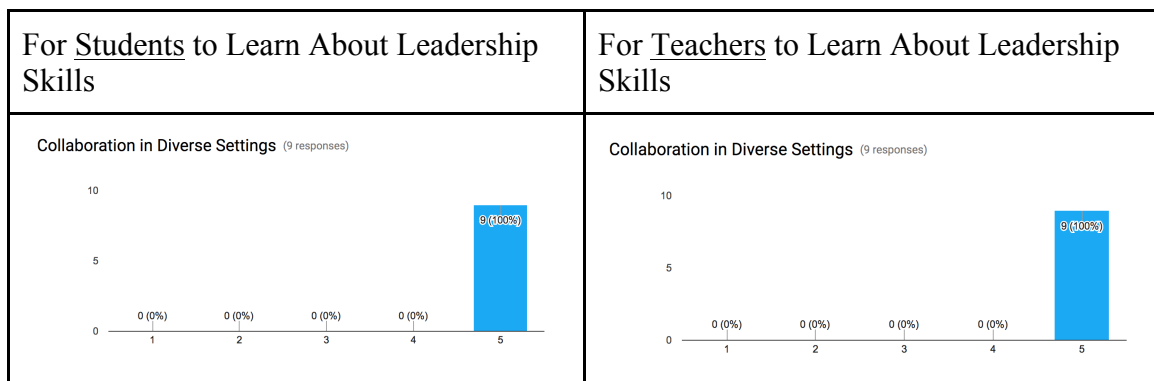
In addition to collecting perceptions of importance of social emotional learning competencies, it was equally essential to collect the perceptions of importance of aspects of leadership skills. Questions #9 and #10 were based on six competencies identified by Steinberg and Li (2014) with direct correlation to Covey's (2004) seven habits of highly effective people.

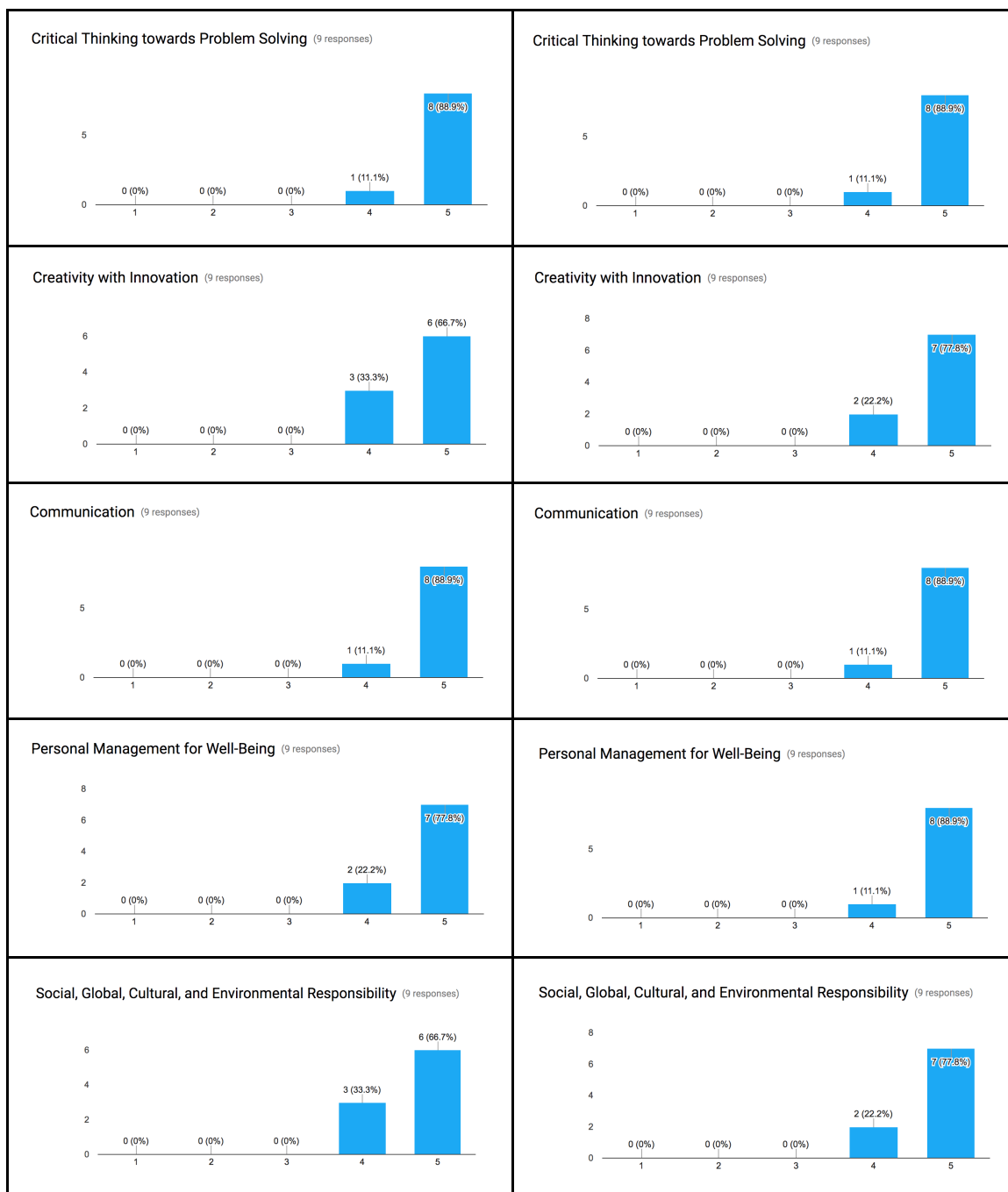
9. On a five-point scale (where 5 is "very important" and 1 is "not at all important"), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to learn about the following aspects of leadership skills at your school? (Each item with a scale: Collaboration in Diverse Settings, Critical Thinking towards Problem Solving, Creativity with Innovation, Communication, Personal Management for Well-Being, Social, Global, Cultural, and Environmental Responsibility): All nine respondents entered a rating for each of the

items and reported each item to be important or very important for students to learn, with all ratings at a 4 or 5 “very important”.

10. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to learn about the following aspects of leadership skills at your school? (Each item with a scale: Collaboration in Diverse Settings, Critical Thinking towards Problem Solving, Creativity with Innovation, Communication, Personal Management for Well-Being, Social, Global, Cultural, and Environmental Responsibility): All nine respondents entered a rating for each of the items in this question. Respondents reported each item to be important or very important for teachers to learn, with ratings of 4 or 5 “very important”. The slight differences between the perception of whether it was important or very important showed that overall teachers had a slightly higher “very important” rating than students. The slight and insignificant overall average rating between how important it was for students was 4.81 compared to 4.87 for teachers in learning about the six aspects of leadership skills shows that students and teachers are perceived by principals with similar expectations for learning leadership skills. The following table shows the differences for each of the items in the question between students and teachers.

Chart 4.3: Students vs. Teachers in Learning Leadership Skills





Rating Questions on Influences of Vision and Practice

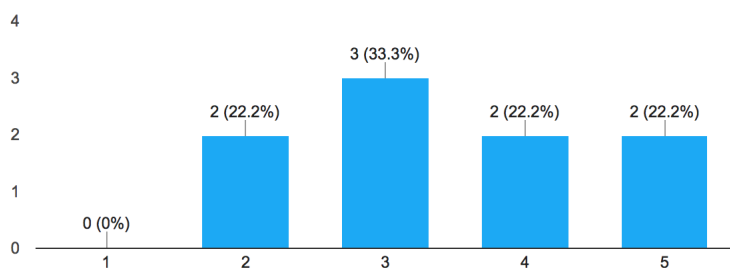
After participants responded to perception questions about how important they felt students and teachers should learn about social emotional learning and leadership skills, participants were asked questions regarding their perceptions of how effective social emotional

learning and student leadership are established in their schools. Questions #11 to #15 were aimed at collecting those perceptions that influence the visions and practices towards social emotional learning and student leadership.

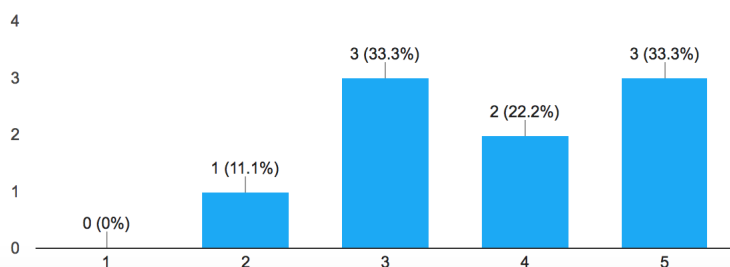
11. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel a clear vision for social emotional learning and student leadership is established with all stakeholders at your school? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership): All nine respondents provided responses by rating their perception of how effective a clear vision was established for social emotional learning and student leadership. In the ratings for both items, responses were equal in the “3” rating, which would have been equivalent to a “neutral” response, but the ratings were not individually labeled. My intention was that respondents would see the five-point scale as a continuum from “not at all effective” to “very effective”. However, the overall average rating of effectiveness of a clear vision for social emotional learning was 3.44 while the overall average rating of effectiveness of a clear vision for student leadership was 3.78. The following charts show the differences in ratings of how effectively established each item is.

Chart 4.4: Rating of Effective Establishment

Vision for Social Emotional Learning (9 responses)



Vision for Student Leadership (9 responses)

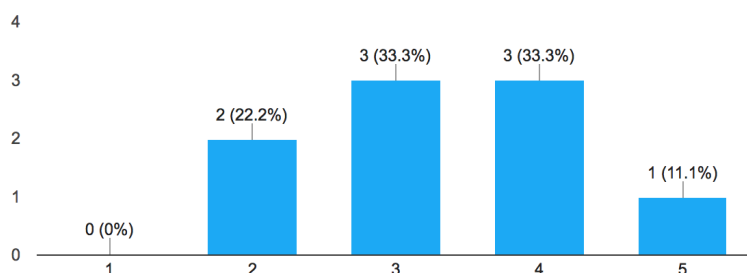


12. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel an implementation plan has been developed to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership): All nine respondents provided ratings to show their perception of how effective an implementation plan has been developed to attain the vision for social emotional learning and the vision for student leadership. The overall average effectiveness of having a developed implementation plan for attaining a vision for social emotional learning was 3.33 while the overall effectiveness of having a developed implementation plan for attaining a vision for student leadership was 3.78. There was a difference of .45 overall average rating showing that principals perceptions towards having implementation plans towards

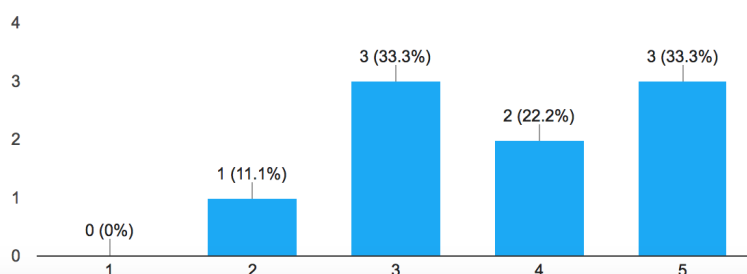
student leadership was slightly higher than social emotional learning. The following chart shows the rating differences between how effective an implementation plan has been developed for each item.

Chart 4.5: Rating of Effective Implementation Plan

Vision for Social Emotional Learning (9 responses)



Vision for Student Leadership (9 responses)

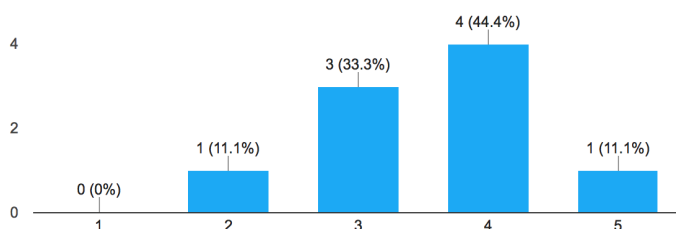


13. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel ongoing professional development has been provided to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership): All nine respondents provided ratings for how effective they perceived professional development was provided to attain the vision for social emotional learning and the vision for student leadership. The overall average rating of effectiveness of providing ongoing professional development towards social emotional learning was 3.56 and towards student leadership

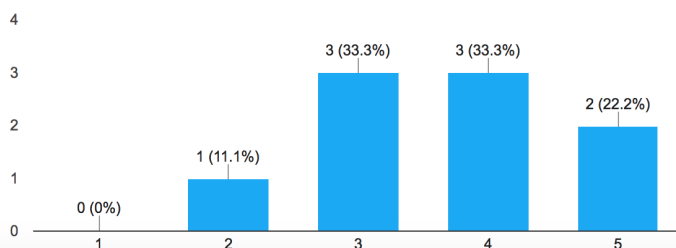
was 3.66. The insignificant difference of .10 is shown between a slight difference between “4” and “5” ratings as seen in the following chart showing how effective ongoing professional development has been provided for each item.

Chart 4.6: Rating of Effective Professional Development

Vision for Social Emotional Learning (9 responses)



Vision for Student Leadership (9 responses)

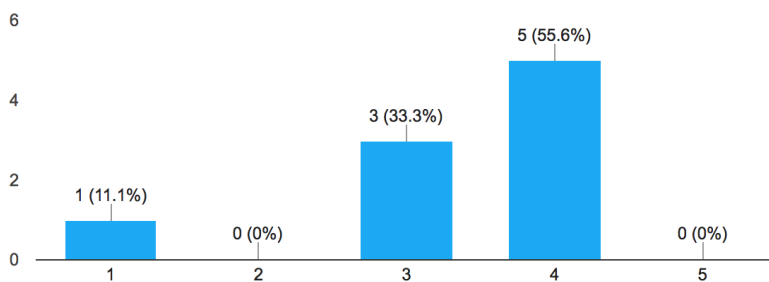


14. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel school-wide policies are integrated in school activities to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership): All nine respondents provided ratings of their perceptions towards how effective school-wide policies were integrated in school activities towards social emotional learning and student leadership. The overall average rating of effectiveness of integrating school policies towards attaining a vision for social emotional learning was 3.33 and towards attaining a vision for student leadership was 3.11. The slight difference in the ratings shows that

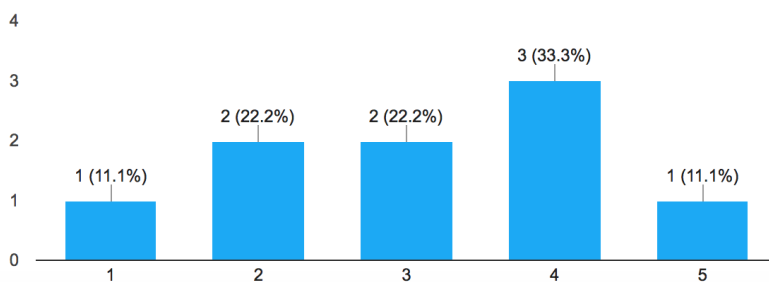
there is a slightly higher perception of having school-wide policies towards social emotional learning rather than student leadership. Furthermore, the charts below show that more principals felt school-wide policies were closer to “not at all” effectively integrated into school activities to attain a vision for student leadership.

Chart 4.7: Rating of Effective School-Wide Policies

Vision for Social Emotional Learning (9 responses)



Vision for Student Leadership (9 responses)

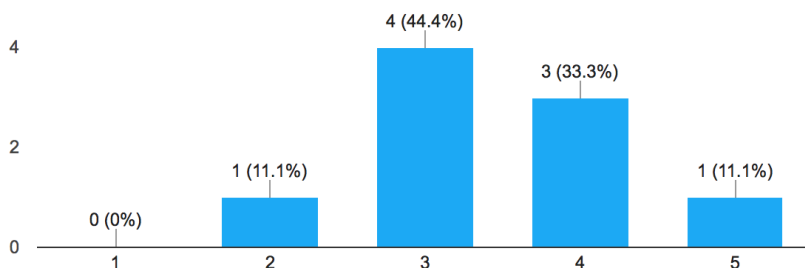


15. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel data on school climate and student social emotional competence is used to guide the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership): All nine respondents provided ratings to show their perception of how well data is used to guide the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership. The overall

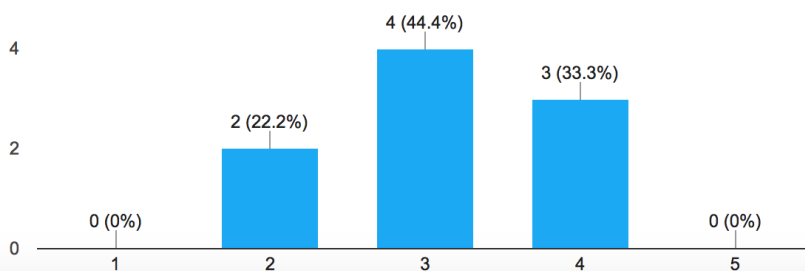
average rating of effectiveness of using data to guide the vision for social emotional learning was 3.44 and for student leadership was 3.11. The slightly higher perception of using data on school climate and student social emotional competence to guide the vision for social emotional learning is shown below as having one more rating in the 5 “very effective”. It should be noted that the number of “3” ratings for both items were equal.

Chart 4.8: Rating of Effective Data Usage to Guide

Vision for Social Emotional Learning (9 responses)



Vision for Student Leadership (9 responses)

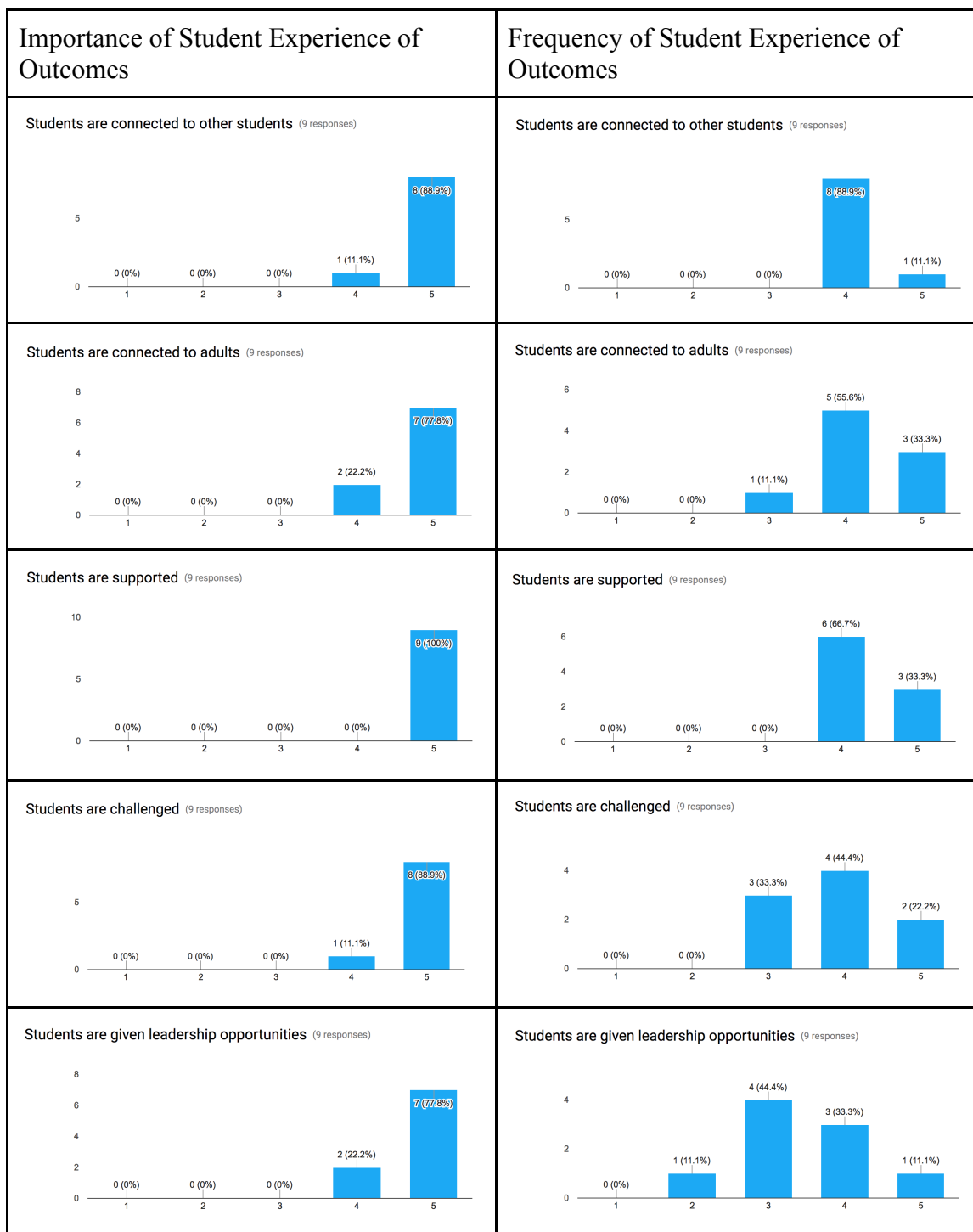


Rating Questions on Perceptions of Student Outcomes

It was important to gather the perceptions of principals in regards to benefits of social emotional learning and leadership development. In questions #16 to #19, respondents were asked about perceptions that influence the outcomes of social emotional learning and student leadership.

16. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to experience the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership at your school? (Each item with a scale: Students are connected to other students, students are connected to adults, students are supported, students are challenged, students are given leadership opportunities): All nine respondents provided ratings for each of the five items. The overall average rating of how important principals felt students should experience the specified outcomes was 4.87. Almost all principals rated the importance of students experiencing each of the items as a “5” with just a few “4” ratings.
17. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel STUDENTS experience the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership at your school? (Each item with a scale: Students are connected to other students, students are connected to adults, students are supported, students are challenged, students are given leadership opportunities): All nine respondents provided ratings for each of the five items. The overall average rating of how often principals felt students experienced the specified outcomes was 3.93. In contrast to the perception of importance for students to experience the specified outcomes, the perception of actual experience of outcomes was a negative .94 difference. In the perception of actual experience, more ratings were “4” and below. The following chart shows the differences between the perceptions of importance versus the perception of actual experience of student outcomes, as related to social emotional learning and student leadership.

Chart 4.9: Importance vs. Frequency of Student Experience of Outcomes

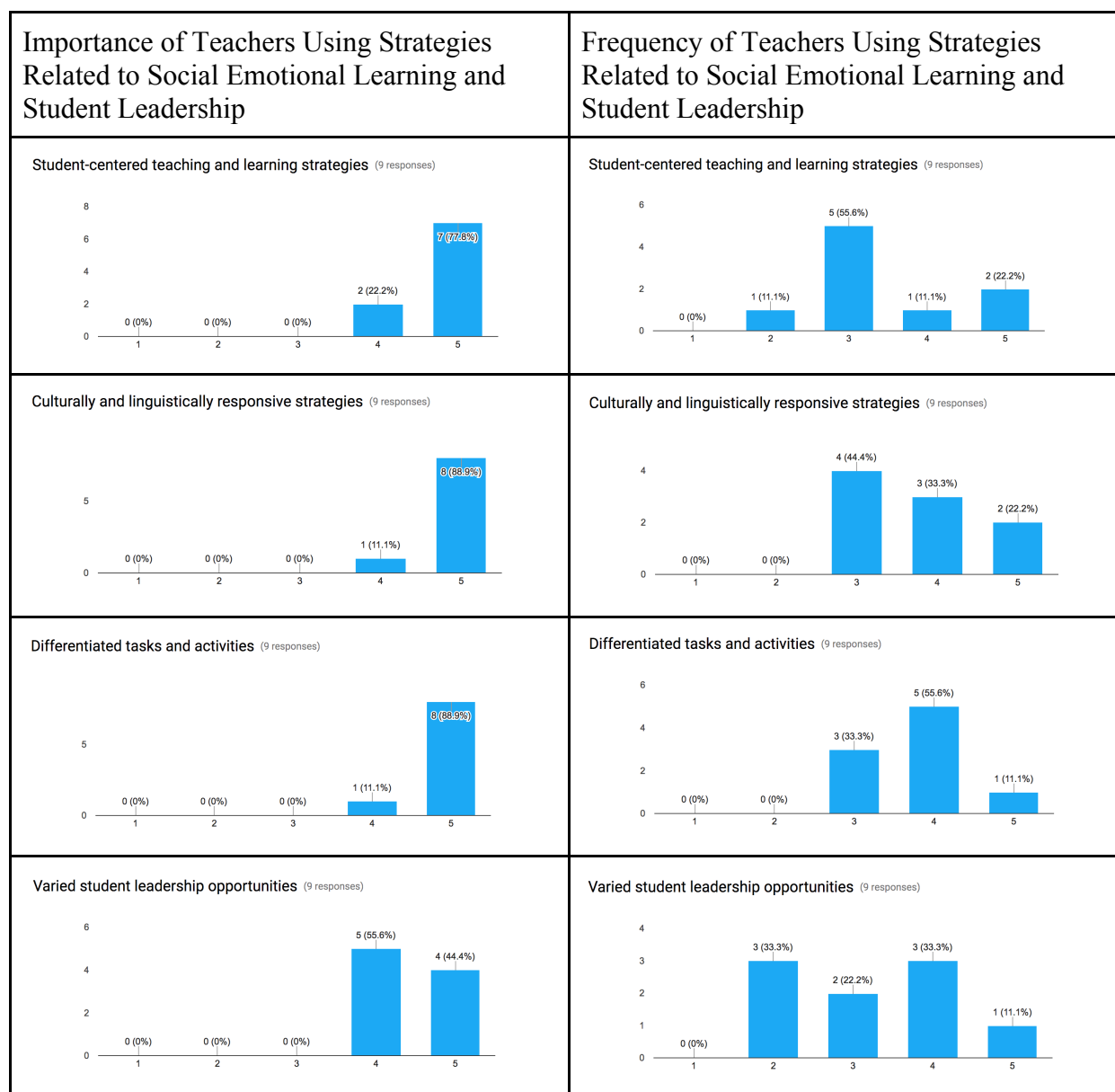


Rating Questions on Perceptions of Teacher Practice

18. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school? (Each item with a scale: Student-centered teaching and learning strategies, culturally and linguistically responsive strategies, differentiated tasks and activities, varied student leadership opportunities): All nine respondents provided ratings for each item. The overall average showing how important principals felt it was for teachers to use student-centered strategies was 4.75. Almost all principals rated each item as “5” except for a few ratings as “4”.

19. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel TEACHERS use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school? (Each item with a scale: Student-centered teaching and learning strategies, culturally and linguistically responsive strategies, differentiated tasks and activities, varied student leadership opportunities): All nine respondents provided ratings for each item. The overall average showing the perception of principals on how often teachers use strategies related to social emotional learning and student leadership was 4.11. The significant difference between the perception of importance and actual usage of strategies related to social emotional learning and student leadership is only .64 but each item shows varied ratings when compared. The following chart shows each item with ratings compared between the perceptions of importance and actual usage.

Chart 4.10: Importance vs. Frequency of Teachers Using SEL and Leadership Strategies



Open-Ended Questions on Description and Practice of Developing Student Leadership

The survey ended with two open-ended questions (Items #20-21) asking participants to describe the school's role in developing student leadership using one statement and one example.

20. What is one statement you would say about what the school's role is in developing leadership in students? (Open Ended Text Box): All nine respondents provided a

statement in response to this question. The statements were sorted into categories based on key words or phrases found within each statement. Eight categories evolved out of the key words or phrases: provide opportunities, support students in leadership journey, core virtues/character, bring out student strengths, provide examples of leaders, create culture of diverse leadership styles and practices, ask about why things are, and take initiative in community. Through regrouping of the categories, several of the categories were similar and fit together so concepts were combined and categories emerged from the combined concepts. The key words and phrases most often used to describe the school's role in developing leadership in students determined four main categories. The categories are Provide Opportunities for Student Leadership, Support Students in Learning Leadership, Develop Character and Strengths in Students, and Connect Students in the Community. The following table shows each category and the specific key words or phrases taken from each statement.

Table 4.1: Categories of School's Role in Developing Leadership in Students

Provide Opportunities for Student Leadership	Support Students in Learning Leadership	Develop Character and Strengths in Students	Connect Students in the Community
Provide opportunities for all students to experience leadership opportunities	To support students in their growth in their leadership journey	To try and fail and try again	...and support them to take initiative in the community.
Staff are intentional about creating and providing authentic leadership opportunities for students.	We develop students as leaders	We center our work on core virtues.	
It is critical that we create opportunities for students to see	...as well as to see examples of leaders in our community that	...and work to bring out students' strengths and gifts from a young age.	

themselves as leaders	mirror our school demographics.		
	Our role is to facilitate the development of leadership skills and capabilities within each student and to create a culture of diverse leadership styles and practices.	We believe that developing a student's character is imperative to their academic success.	
		Our role is to support students to realize their passions, ask questions about why things are the way they are	

Almost all of the statements in their original reported forms were placed into categories. The only original statement that was not included in the analysis or in the categories and themes was the statement “We need to work on this area.” The statement represented an expression that did not seem to be a response directly related to what the school’s role is in developing leadership in students.

21. What is one example of a school practice that supports your statement above? (Open Ended Text Box): All nine respondents provided at least one example of a school practice to support their statements from Question #20. The key words and phrases of the responses to this question determined six categories: students in planning and leading assemblies and events, leadership roles, community connections, student ambassador programs, global studies, and student-led social emotional learning. The categories were further analyzed and combined and three categories emerged. The categories are Provide Student Leadership Roles, Support Student-Led Activities, Develop Community and

Global Learning. The following table shows how each key word or phrase from the responses fit under each category.

Table 4.2: Categories of School Practices

Provide Student Leadership Roles	Support Student-Led Activities	Develop Community Connections and Global Learning
We have students involved in leadership roles throughout the school beginning in kindergarten. They apply for jobs based on their interests and strengths, are interviewed, and hired for these leadership jobs.	Student leadership in planning and leading all-school assemblies.	One example is our Student Leadership Day.
School and classroom level leadership opportunities are being developed and added to continually.	Monthly all school assemblies hosted by each grade-level. Through the assembly (skits, etc.) students in that grade-level teach the rest of the school the virtue of the month.	Our magnet programming has a foundation which includes community partnerships. We are seeking varied and diverse community connections that both allow students to experience and witness leadership.
We recruit and engage 4th-7th grade student leaders who represent different factions within our school community to become YogaCalm practitioners and collaborators with adults to help spread the breathing practices and other self-management (CASEL Domains) techniques which we promote and teach as a school-wide practice.		Students are encouraged to volunteer in leadership roles in our community by defining “needs” either locally or in the larger world community for which a solution can be found or for which an effort can be made by students to reduce the problem’s impact (i.e. raising money to buy a goat for a family in Africa, helping to make sandwiches for local food shelves)
		Student Ambassador program
		We have a class called

		“global studies” where students are able to learn about world issues and discuss solutions/needs within their community and beyond.
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Almost all of the original statements were placed into the categories. There was only one statement that was not included in the categories. The statement was “ We are developing a new mission and vision and will unwrap them to see where student leadership falls.” After further analysis of the all of the responses, this statement fit more as an expression of the current state of the school and not as a response to how the school develops leadership in students.

Using the Survey Findings to Select Participants for Interviews and Observations

After the surveys were completed, analyzed, and categorized, there were several trends that emerged from the data. The findings for each of the types of questions explained in the previous section provided detailed analysis of each question and variations in data between questions. Careful analysis of responses between respondents as well as summarized average response ratings for each respondent were essential for developing a comprehensive view of the perceptions that would inform theory building. I realized that in order to discover categories through the online survey data and to best use the online survey data to help me select the principals for elite interviews and school sites for field observations, I needed to rearrange my data into categories and compare ideas within categories as well as across categories. By doing this, I hoped to see connections and comparisons as Maxwell (2013) explains as being necessary for determining broader areas to investigate.

In the beginning stages of data analysis of the survey data, I read through all of the online survey responses in the collected raw format. Then I followed up with several repeated readings

of the online survey responses, making notes and jotting interesting data differences between questions. I even tried to calculate the differences in rating averages. Next, I transferred all of the online survey data into a spreadsheet format with respondents on each row and survey questions in each column. There were several respondents that showed the highest average ratings and there were several questions that emerged as highest or lowest rated question items. As Maxwell (2013) and Charmaz (2014) both suggested, the new discoveries about the data caused me to wonder more about reasons why some principals had higher average ratings than others and why some items were rated higher than others, which made me want to investigate the new ideas further.

The principals with the highest total average ratings were from three very different school settings and school district systems. Each principal had an average total rating above 4.6 which was at least .3 higher than the rest of the other principals. As described previously in Chapter Three, each of the three principals selected for elite interviews had ratings as follows:

Elite Interviewee A: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.8, which was the highest average of all the participants. This elite interviewee has been the principal at his school between four to six years but has been a principal for over ten years. This school is a school in a larger public school district in a midwestern urban city. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee B: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.62, which was the third highest average. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school for over ten years and has been a principal for over 10 years. This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is a public charter school. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the

ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee C: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.66, which was the second highest average. This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is part of a larger school district. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school between one to three years and has worked as a principal for one to three years. In the response ratings for all of the question items in #7-#19, the ratings by this respondent were almost all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective. Only one question item received a rating of 3 but the overall average was still second highest because of more occurrences of 5 ratings on many of the question items.

Another way that the online survey responses contributed to the elite interviews was through informing the creation of question items. Several question items showed significant differences in total average among all respondents and several questions, when analyzed further, showed significant differences between respondents. From this observation of the significant differences between respondents, interview questions were crafted to probe further into the perspectives of particular question items. Careful consideration of how questions are formed and what order they are presented could highly affect the flow of the conversation during interviews as well as the amount of response from interviewees (Charmaz, 2014; Maxwell, 2013; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Significant differences between responses on question items as well as between respondents is presented in the following subsection.

Significant Survey Response Differences

7. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to learn about the following aspects of social and

emotional learning at your school? (Each item with a scale: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making)

8. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to learn about the following aspects of social and emotional learning at your school? (Each item with a scale: Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision making)

As expected, respondents all rated 5 to each item on these two questions. These were initial starting questions that provided insight into the mindset of principals in terms of their opinion on how important it was for students and teachers to learn skills in social emotional learning. With a significant total average rating of 5 for each item under these two questions, 100% of the principals displayed a positive mindset around social emotional learning. Principals rated each item, which signifies that they either had an understanding of what each item entailed or had knowledge of the five domains of social emotional learning (CASEL, 2012). Furthermore, the results of these two questions aligned with results found by Education Direction (2016) that out of 669 principals they surveyed, 99% of those principals believed social emotional learning skills were equally or more important than academic skills.

9. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for STUDENTS to learn about the following aspects of leadership skills at your school? (Each item with a scale: Collaboration in Diverse Settings, Critical Thinking towards Problem Solving, Creativity with Innovation, Communication, Personal Management for Well-Being, Social, Global, Cultural, and Environmental Responsibility)

10. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for TEACHERS to learn about the following aspects of leadership skills at your school? (Each item with a scale: Collaboration in Diverse Settings, Critical Thinking towards Problem Solving, Creativity with Innovation, Communication, Personal Management for Well-Being, and Social, Global, Cultural, and Environmental Responsibility)

As expected, respondents all rated 4 or 5 on each item on these two questions. The average rating for each item under each question was between 4.78 and 4.89. Although learning 21st century skills is not a new concept for many principals, the 21st century skills framed under student leadership may have been a new paradigm for some principals since these six components of 21st century skills (Steinberg and Li, 2014) are also in direct correlation to the seven habits of highly effective people (Covey, 2004). However, principals were cognizant of the fact that the skills listed under #9 and #10 were important or very important for students and teachers to learn, which reflected similarly to results from Education Direction’s (2016) survey of 669 principals showing that 84% of principals believed student leadership to be a valuable behavior and mindset in students.

11. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel a clear vision for social emotional learning and student leadership is established with all stakeholders at your school? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)

The three selected elite interviewees all had 4 or 5 ratings for having an effective clear

vision for social emotional learning and a clear vision for student leadership. One other respondent rated a 4 for clear vision for social emotional learning and 5 for clear vision for student leadership. However the remaining five respondents had ratings at 3 or below for each of items. This was a significant difference between the selected elite interviewees and the remaining respondents because the visions for social emotional learning and for student leadership are essential for sustaining practices and policies. As Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) suggest, the principal must possess and communicate forward a vision for the school and be able to define priorities aligned to the mission of the school. One surprising discovery from the difference in total average ratings was that the total average rating for clear vision for social emotional learning was 3.44 while total average rating for clear vision for student leadership was 3.78. Although the difference is only a .34, I had expected clear vision for social emotional learning to have a higher average rating than clear vision for student leadership. However, the resulting ratings from this question provided me with further assurance that I had selected the most secure principals as elite interviewees.

12. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel an implementation plan has been developed to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)

Only the three selected interviewees rated 4 or 5 for effective implementation plans for both social emotional learning and student leadership. All the remaining six respondents rated either 3 and below for effective implementation plans for both social emotional learning and

student leadership or there was a difference in ratings between effective implementation plans for social emotional learning and student leadership. One respondent rated a 3 for effective implementation plan for social emotional learning while effective implementation plan for student leadership was rated as a 5. Another respondent rated effective implementation plan for social emotional learning as a 3 and effective implementation plan for student leadership as a 4. These variations between ratings for effective implementation plans for social emotional learning and student leadership were surprising because of the higher total average ratings. The total average rating for effective implementation plan for social emotional learning was 3.33 while the total average rating for effective implementation plan for student leadership was 3.78. I had expected effective implementation plan for social emotional learning to have a higher total average rating than effective implementation plan for student leadership.

13. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel ongoing professional development has been provided to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)

Only the three selected interviewees rated 4 or 5 for effective ongoing professional development for both social emotional learning and student leadership. The remaining six respondents rated either 3 and below for effective ongoing professional development for both social emotional learning and student leadership or had different variations of ratings between effective ongoing professional development for social emotional learning and student leadership. One respondent rated effective ongoing professional development for social

emotional learning as 3 and effective ongoing professional development for student leadership as 5. Another respondent rated effective ongoing professional development for social emotional learning as 2 and effective ongoing professional development for student leadership as 4. Still, another respondent rated effective ongoing professional development for social emotional learning as 4 and effective ongoing professional development for student leadership as 3. The total average rating for effective ongoing professional development for social emotional programs was 3.56 while the total average rating for effective ongoing professional development for student leadership was 3.67. The variations in the ratings among the remaining respondents was interesting given that social emotional learning has had a longer history of research and programs (CASEL, 2012) compared to student leadership (Education Direction, 2016).

14. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel school-wide policies are integrated in school activities to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)

Only the three selected interviewees rated 4 or 5 for effective school-wide policies for both social emotional learning and student leadership. The remaining six respondents rated either 3 and below for both effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning and student leadership or rated a difference between effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning and student leadership. One respondent rated 4 for effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning and 2 for effective school-wide policies for student

leadership. Another rated 3 for effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning and 4 effective school-wide policies for student leadership. A third respondent rated 4 for effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning and 3 for effective school-wide policies for student leadership. One respondent rated effective school-wide policies for both social emotional learning and student leadership as 1, which seemed significant since the rest of the ratings from this respondent were much higher. The total average rating for effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning was 3.33 and the total average rating for effective school-wide policies for student leadership was 3.11. It should also be noted that effective school-wide policies for student leadership had one of the lowest total average ratings throughout the entire survey.

In this question, the rating for effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning was slightly higher than effective school-wide policies for student leadership. This interesting shift between higher and lower average ratings for social emotional learning and student leadership inspired questions about how the principal's perception of having a clear vision for social emotional learning and student leadership align with the effective school-wide policies for social emotional learning and student leadership. Although Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) do not specifically address setting policies as a role of a principal, they do propose that the principal should be clear about their short and long-term goals for their schools and define priorities based on the central mission of the school. Part of communicating priorities and setting goals involves understanding how policies impact the practices within the school. This significant shift in total average ratings between social emotional learning and student leadership was informative in crafting the interview questions and in analysis of the interview responses in the next section.

15. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel data on school climate and student social emotional competence is used to guide the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership? (Each item with a scale: Vision for Social Emotional Learning, Vision for Student Leadership)

Two of the three selected interviewees rated 4 or 5 for effective data usage for both social emotional learning and student leadership. One of the three selected interviewees rated a 3 for effective data usage for social emotional learning and a 4 for effective data usage for student leadership. One of the remaining six respondents rated a 4 for effective data usage for social emotional learning and a 3 for effective data usage for student leadership. Another remaining respondent rated a 4 for effective data usage for social emotional learning and a 2 for effective data usage for student leadership. The remaining respondents had ratings of 3 and below for effective data usage for both social emotional learning and student leadership.

The total average rating for effective data usage for social emotional learning was 3.44 and the total average rating for effective data usage for student leadership was 3.11. Similar to Question #14 there was a shift in total average ratings showing higher total average rating for effective data usage for social emotional learning and effective data usage for student leadership was the second of two of the lowest total average ratings throughout the entire survey. Although the difference between total average ratings for effective data usage for social emotional learning and effective data usage for student leadership is only a .33, the fact that effective data usage for social emotional learning had a higher total average rating reflects the fact that further research and assessment tools have been developed to measure effects and programs for student social emotional learning (Education Week Research Center, 2015).

17. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel STUDENTS experience the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership at your school? (Each item with a scale: Students are connected to other students, students are connected to adults, students are supported, students are challenged, students are given leadership opportunities)

There was expected to be more variations of ratings with this question dependent on variations of ratings to Questions #11 to #15 since this question involved responding with the perception of actual student experience in each of the aspects of social emotional learning and student leadership. However, all of the respondents rated each item on this question as a 4 or 5 with the exception of one item, which had the most variations. The item “Students are given leadership opportunities” ranged from one respondent with a rating of 2, four respondents with a rating of 3, three respondents with a rating of 4, and one respondent with a rating of 5.

In contrast with Question #16, which asked respondents to rate the level of importance of having students experience each aspect of social emotional learning and student leadership, the total average ratings for each item of this question was significantly lower than the total average ratings of each item in Question #16. For example, in Question #16, level of importance for “Students are given leadership opportunities” had a total average rating of 4.78 and in this question, level of actual student experience for “Students are given leadership opportunities” had a total average rating of 3.44. This is a significant difference of 1.34 and portrays a significant difference between belief or desire and experience or practice.

The significant difference prompted me to question the definition of student leadership and what would be described as “student leadership opportunities”. This difference also

reflected the realization that in the Education Week Research Center (2015) study on social and emotional learning, student leadership opportunities was not included in the study on school climate while social emotional learning components, as defined by CASEL (2012), were represented throughout the study. In the study, one of the highest rated perceived student outcomes for school climate was that students and staff felt safe at school, with 60% of 1,043 respondents, while students being engaged and motivated was rated as only 20% of 1,043 respondents (Education Week Research Center, 2015).

The differences in ratings between items in Question #16 and Question #17 as well as the variations among ratings within each item reassured that one of my interview questions should be a direct question regarding school-wide practices to support social emotional learning and student leadership. This was also a direct reflection of my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

19. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel TEACHERS use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school? (Each item with a scale: Student-centered teaching and learning strategies, culturally and linguistically responsive strategies, differentiated tasks and activities, varied student leadership opportunities)

There were expected variations in ratings since Question #18 was a question about perception of importance while this question was about the actual usage of strategies by

teachers. All three of the selected interviewees had 4 or 5 in each item under this question. The remaining six respondents had variations among the items. One of the items with the most significant variations was “Student-centered teaching and learning strategies” which resulted in one respondent with a rating of 2, five respondents with a rating of 3, one respondent with a rating of 4, and two respondents with a rating of 5. Although this item could be applied within the realm of social emotional learning or student leadership, it was mainly an item that would apply towards current instruction practice. In order to be effective, much of curriculum and pedagogy in the current education system needs to be adjusted through differentiated materials and strategies in order to meet learning needs of students (Hattie, 2012; Marzano, 2005).

The other items with the most significant variations among respondents was “Varied student leadership opportunities” which resulted in three respondents with a rating of 2, two respondents with a rating of 3, three respondents with a rating of 4, and one respondent with a rating of 5. This item on this question was a direct reflection of a strategy for student leadership and correlated to the item on Question #17 “Students are given leadership opportunities”. The total average ratings between these two items was quite similar as Question #17 “Students are given leadership opportunities” had a total average rating of 3.44 and Question #19 “Varied student leadership opportunities” had a total average rating of 3.22. The main difference was that Question #19 “Varied student leadership opportunities” had three respondent ratings as a 2 versus Question #17 “Students are given leadership opportunities” had only one respondent rating as a 2.

The variations with these two specific items in this question inspired further questions regarding the principal as an instructional leader and practices that could be considered to support social emotional learning and student leadership. With the increased expectation that

principals should be the pillars of instructional leadership through guaranteeing viable curriculum and instruction, modeling and reinforcing examples of instructional expectations, and communicating and supporting expected practices (Ediger, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Marzano, 2005), it was apparent that the interview questions needed to also include questions regarding the principal's perception of his or her role as well as the secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

The responses from the open-ended questions from the survey were also analyzed to inform the questions for the elite interviews. In Chapter Three, summaries of the responses into categories were shared along with the specific description of the interview questions. The analysis of the elite interview responses and findings are presented in the next section.

Analysis and Summary of Elite Interview Findings

The purpose of the elite interviews was to gain deeper understanding of the perceptions held by selected principals that would further inform my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* and my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. Although the online survey provided much data around overall perceptions of social emotional learning and student leadership, the elite interviews would provide a deeper perspective on the underlying values and beliefs of principals. I also hoped to gain more insight into whether the categories

developed from the survey responses and the significant differences in ratings would be validated.

The Selected Elite Interviewees

The elite interviews occurred with two out of the three selected elite interviewees. The selected elite interviewees had the three highest total average ratings per respondent on the online survey. Each of the selected interviewees were contacted by telephone and email and either participated in the elite interview and/or the field observation. For the purpose of maintaining anonymity and confidentiality of identifying schools, I intentionally did not share information on the explicit identifying connection of the elite interviewees to their respective schools. Also, since there were only nine total schools that were represented within the online surveys, I wanted to refrain from using any identifying characteristics of the schools in order to ensure schools would not be individually identified. The selected elite interviewees, as presented previously in Chapter Three, were the following:

Elite Interviewee A: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.8, which was the highest average of all the participants. This elite interviewee has been the principal at his school between four to six years but has been a principal for over ten years. This school is a school in a larger public school district in a midwestern urban city. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee B: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.62, which was the third highest average. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school for over ten years and has been a principal for over 10 years. This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is a public charter school. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the

ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee C: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.66, which was the second highest average. This school is located in a midwestern suburb and is part of a larger school district. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school between one to three years and has worked as a principal for one to three years. In the response ratings for all of the question items in #7-#19, the ratings by this respondent were almost all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective. Only one question item received a rating of 3 but the overall average was still second highest because of more occurrences of 5 ratings on many of the question items.

Descriptions of Elite Interview Settings and Interviewee Behavior

Each of the elite interviewees were contacted by telephone and email describing the interview and were given a Letter of Informed Consent prior to the scheduled interview date. Elite interviewee A and elite interviewee B agreed to participate in the face to face interview and a time and date was scheduled. Elite interviewee C did not agree to participate in the elite interview but agreed to participate in the field observation, which is described further in the section Field Observation Findings in this chapter. The elite interviews occurred at the school buildings of elite interviewee A and elite interviewee B.

The interview with elite interviewee A was scheduled at mid afternoon on a school day and I met elite interviewee A in the office area of the school, following a field observation of the office and front entrance area. We sat down for the interview in the office of elite interviewee A in two chairs positioned in slight diagonal angles but facing each other. The chairs were both on one side of elite interviewee A's desk. I began by thanking elite interviewee A for completing

the online survey then proceeded to explain my research focus and questions. I gave elite interviewee A one copy of the interview questions and explained that the interview would take less than forty-five minutes. Elite interviewee A sat leaning back on his chair with legs crossed and shoulders relaxed right from the first interview question. Elite interviewee A took his time in thinking and speaking slowly to articulate his responses. There was a consistent rate of speech throughout the interview, interrupted only by pausing to think before speaking. The total length of the interview was thirty-six minutes, with an insignificant interruption of forty seconds as elite interviewee A briefly answered a call to let the caller know he would call later.

The interview with elite interviewee B was scheduled at mid morning on a school day and I met elite interviewee B in the office area of the school. Since the conference room we were scheduled to use was unavailable for another fifteen minutes prior to sitting down for the interview, elite interviewee B provided a tour of the building showing the main hallways, cafeteria, Pre-Kindergarten classroom, and a fourth grade classroom. We sat down for the interview in the cafeteria and I began by thanking elite interviewee B for completing the online survey then proceeded to explain my research focus and questions. I gave elite interviewee B a copy of the interview questions and explained that the interview would take less than forty-five minutes. Before we could continue, we were interrupted by a class of students coming into the cafeteria for lunch. We paused and moved to the conference room, which was available by this time. Elite interviewee B sat forward in her seat across from the conference table and spoke openly but quickly in her responses during the first five interview questions. Elite interviewee B held her hands on the table during the first five interview questions, with breaks only to touch the paper with the interview questions on them. During the sixth interview question, elite interviewee B leaned back in her seat and relaxed her shoulders. Elite interviewee B remained

leaning back with relaxed shoulders for the remainder of the interview. Elite interviewee B's rate of speech varied between a medium to faster rate during responses to each of the questions, so whether elite interviewee B was leaning forward or backward, there did not seem to be a significant effect on her rate of speech. The total length of the interview was sixteen minutes, minus the pause to move from the cafeteria to the conference room.

Description of Coding and Categorizing of Interviews

Each of the nine interview questions connected to either my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* or to one of my secondary research questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?* *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, or *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. The questions were purposefully arranged in the current order during the interview to allow the elite interviewees to respond from a broader perspective to a narrower perspective in connection to the research questions. As Maxwell (2013) and McMillan & Schumacher (2010) advise, the order of the interview questions should be considered carefully to allow a natural flow of conversation and questions should be posed to elicit generalized and specific responses. By varying the questions, it allowed me to gain broad perspectives that may be more theoretical and narrower perspectives that may provide more specific examples. The placement of the questions also allowed me to analyze the interview transcriptions using coding and categorizing that went from broad ideas to specific concepts that could be categorized.

The analysis of the interview transcriptions involved repeated steps of reading and coding, writing memos on wonderings and noticings, categorizing, and discovering concepts. Maxwell (2013) describes this process of data analysis as an interconnected and overlapping

network. As described in Chapter Three, the interview transcriptions went through repeated readings. During each round of reading, I developed narrower coding methods and was finally able to create categories for each significant statement or example shared by the interviewees. I used a system of coding during the initial reading in which I assigned different highlighting colors to different significant statements and examples within each interview question segment. During the second round of reading the transcriptions, I placed the transcriptions side by side to compare and read each interview question segment and found similarities around the ideas between the interviewees. I marked these similar ideas and concepts with the same highlighting colors and wrote key words or phrases in the margins of the transcriptions to identify the similar categories. During the third reading of the transcriptions placed side by side, I tallied the number of instances each category was represented by statements or examples. In the fourth round of reading the transcriptions, I combined concepts into categories that were broader in scope. After categorizing, I reviewed the transcript a fifth time to find particular categories that the concepts portrayed and counted the final tallies within each category.

After multiple times of reading the transcriptions from interviews with elite interviewee A and elite interviewee B, each of the transcriptions were read through with the intention to check the coding and categorization. I knew that my interpretation of the data would affect the coding and categorization as a common and acceptable part of the constructivist grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2014). Categorized statements and examples formed specific categories as coding for meaning and categorizing provided further insight into the perceptions of principals towards social emotional learning and student leadership. The categories are presented in the next subsection and they appear in relation to where they were realized throughout the interviews according to the order of the interview questions. The categories and excerpts from the

transcriptions in the following subsection are also presented within each cluster of interview questions that were intended to inform on my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* and the secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*.

Categories and Excerpts from Elite Interviews

How do elementary school principals define student leadership?

1. As a principal, describe your role in this school?
2. How would you describe what people might feel or see in this school?
3. How do you define student leadership?

Based on the findings from the online survey, these questions were intended to capture the perceptions of what the principals feel is their role and what they value in their school. I felt that in order to define student leadership, principals had to also know what was important to them and express a definition of student leadership in their own words. Each of the interviewees provided responses that were full of insight into what they valued. It was also interesting that both elite interviewee A and elite interviewee B expressed similar ideas. Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) presented that principals needed to see themselves as instructional leaders who would ensure that students were provided with the best possible programs and be able to communicate the priorities clearly.

There were three categories that emerged about how principals viewed their roles. Both interviewee A and interviewee B expressed their roles within the school as being the main leader

of the overall school vision. In the interviews, examples of being leaders of the school vision, which included defining the vision, clarifying the vision, and moving practices and programming to align with the vision were mentioned. Specifically, there were seven total instances of comments and examples that were shared about developing and articulating the vision for the school. Interviewees also expressed similar views on ensuring that programming met the demands of the students. There were three total direct statements made in reference to providing programming. The third category that was common between both interviewees was to ensure positive student outcomes. There were two total direct statements in reference to making sure there were positive student outcomes.

In describing the school environment, there were three categories that emerged from the coding and categorization. Those categories are having positive student examples, feeling positive school climate, and visually represented academics. There were two instances of positive student examples mentioned, three instances of statements representing positive school climate, and four instances of statements representing visually represented academics as important within the school.

The definition of student leadership was expressed by both interviewees as having students who were reflective and action-oriented. There were eight instances of statements that represented action-oriented behavior and four instances of statements that represented being reflective.

The following list shows some examples of statements from the interviews that represented the categories that emerged from these first three questions, which addressed the secondary research question, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*.

- *My role in this school is to help develop and articulate the long term, long range vision*

for this school.

- *My role is helping to define that vision and [give] clarity to it.*
- *We are trying to create within the physical structure, within our programming...within our instructional practice, what we are trying to create for students that is what our school is driven by.*
- *To develop young people who are thoughtful, articulate, self-advocating, critical and creative thinkers.*
- *To ensure that we're providing programming and students are making growth in [prepared mind, physical fitness, and leadership].*
- *[People] would see in the eyes of kids, an awful lot of curiosity and interest and mixed and mingled with joy.*
- *You would see the walls covered with visual representations of artistic creations by students.*
- *The sense of community in this school...with adults and students, just the feeling of the school.*
- *People talk to each other by name. There's good eye to eye contact between students and between students and staff.*
- *Student leadership is kids who are willing to not be passive, but who are willing to be active agents of change and active agents of community.*
- *I feel student leadership has to do with their actions.*
- *I think it's that you actually, the people can walk in the building and see the adults and our students reflective and leading each other.*

What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?

4. What is the school's role in developing student leadership?
5. In your opinion, how does developing leadership in students impact their character development?
6. What leadership skills do you feel are most important for students to learn?

The elementary school principal has a strong influence on the school climate and culture through decisions and communication of policies and practices throughout the school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). With this in mind, I read through the transcriptions of the interviews with an open mind to what might emerge from the interviewees in regards to developing student leadership. Both elite interviewees shared similar perceptions about the school's role in developing student leadership and further examples of what leadership entailed.

The one main category that emerged about what the school's role should be towards developing student leadership was to support students to develop their identities to be active members of the community. There were eight instances within the interviews in which statements made were reflective of this main category. Each of the interviewees expressed the importance of students knowing themselves and knowing when to take action to do the right thing.

In describing how leadership in students impacts their character development, both interviews gave examples from their schools that determined two categories. One category was to grow leadership qualities, which was portrayed by three statements and examples. An

interesting observation of the responses from the interviewees was that both interviewees shared examples of how teachers and staff in their schools were overtly responsible for teaching students to develop a moral sense of self. The other category that emerged was similar to the category in the last question and that was that students needed to have a sense of identity so that they could practice being leaders in their own ways. There were four instances in which examples and statements represented this category showing that this was an important category.

The last question aimed at understanding the beliefs of principals towards student leadership was a question intended to gain further understanding of what the interviewees thought leadership entailed. Three main categories emerged from the categorization of statements and examples from the interviewees. The first category was that leadership involved having a moral sense of responsibility. There were five instances of statements and examples that represented this having a moral sense of responsibility. Some of the statements overlapped into the next category, which was that leadership meant knowing yourself, including your strengths and limitations. Each interviewee shared views of this category of knowing self through theoretical statements of what they believed to be qualities important for students, which were accounted for by three instances in the interviews. The third category that was well represented by both interviewees was that leadership involved understanding others. There were five instances of statements and examples that fit within this category and included solid theoretical statements regarding what the interviewees believed leadership should involve.

All three of the questions were intended to elicit further insight into the perspectives of the principals to expand on the understanding of what beliefs principals should have regarding student leadership. The categories that emerged through these questions provided a deeper and more focused view on leadership. The following excerpts of statements from the interviews are

examples showing the depth of some of the responses.

- *Through the role models of the adults that work with that crew, we really can instill those character traits.*
- *To help students become strong enough within themselves or accelerate and deepen the strength they have in themselves.*
- *To help kids think about the difference between being a passive member of a community versus being an active member of a community.*
- *I think helping to develop leadership in students has a huge impact on their character because it begs the question, what is their character? Who are they? How are they defined? How do they define themselves? What are the core values?*
- *It's what you do when no one is looking and what you do whether you're in the community or you're in your school.*
- *The impact is [how] we help them identify the character, their own character driven by values of what is right and wrong, what is important, what is not, what is something worth fighting for or working towards.*
- *Loyalty, being humble, you know just teaching the student that it's not always about them.*
- *They also have to understand themselves in terms of fear, joy, all of those being variable emotions that go through us.*
- *First they understand themselves and they start to understand the larger community.*

What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?

7. Some principals believe that developing leadership in students involves providing opportunities and connecting students to the community, why do you think principals

believe this?

8. What are some specific school-wide practices that have supported leadership in students?

These two questions were aimed at gathering more specific examples of what schools do to support student leadership. From the survey results, the importance of providing student leadership opportunities was rated as 4.78, which signified high importance. However the perception expressed by principals about actual student experience in student leadership opportunities was only 3.44, which signified less instances of students actually in leadership opportunities. Furthermore, the rating of how often teachers provided varied student leadership opportunities was 3.22, which signified that the practice of providing student leadership was not frequent enough. Because of the difference between perception of importance of providing student leadership opportunities versus actual practice of providing student leadership opportunities, these two questions served to gather more specific information on the practices that existed to support student leadership.

The question probing into why principals may believe that developing leadership involves providing opportunities and connecting students to the community was intended to gain deeper understanding underlying this belief that was expressed during the online survey. There were two main categories that emerged from the interviews that provided the further insight into why this belief was expressed. The first category that emerged was that students needed real-world applications of leadership. This category was represented by ten different instances of statements and examples. Both interviewees provided explicit examples of real-world applications of leadership that was happening at each of their schools. The second category that emerged

through the responses to this question was that students needed to engage in service to others through community partnerships, which was represented through three instances of statements and examples. This category connected back to the previous statements shared that students needed to understand their communities and service their communities. In fact, the interviewees both talked longer in response to this question than they did in other questions.

The next question asked about school-wide practices supporting student leadership and generated responses that provided specific examples of what practices were in place in the schools of the interviewees. Through the examples of practices in place, there were apparent categories that staff support for student leadership was essential and students needed to have active roles throughout the school. There were four instances of statements and examples representing that staff support for student leadership was essential. Both interviewees shared explicit examples of their teachers engaged in classroom strategies to support the school vision towards student leadership as well as classroom strategies for leadership within the classroom. The other main category that students needed to have active roles throughout the school was represented through seven instances of statements and examples. Even though the interviewees were from schools with very different overall vision for what their schools focus on, both interviewees expressed the need for students to engage in school-wide leadership roles and provided examples of some of those leadership roles.

The responses to both of these questions provided a deeper understanding of why student leadership was important to principals and several practical ideas for providing student leadership opportunities were also shared. The following excerpts and examples shared by the interviewees are a good beginning list of what leadership opportunities can exist for students.

- *We have several partnerships that we have ...all of our students can participate.*

- *It's just practice for the students to see that to understand [what's] appropriate, what's not appropriate when you're having those experiences.*
- *Those experiences are practice for them and teaching moments for adults, [be]cause sometimes there's practice for adults too.*
- *It gives kids one aspect of a real world application if you're connecting them to the community.*
- *It first starts with how can children affect their community within the school and get some positive reinforcement that their actions can receive [and] can generate a positive result.*
- *Kids just can't live in the abstract. They have to have tangible, real world application or real world experience.*
- *It isn't a test score. It's that you have a civic mind, moral, ethical, thoughtful, sharp individual who can work with groups, communicate effectively and sensitively.*
- *We partner with the city as a part of the Adopt a Park program.*
- *We also have community gardens in the back and ... a group of kids and parents volunteer to come in over the summer and help take care of it, then we donate that product to different places.*
- *Kids came up with the multiple designs and they refined them down to the best design for how to handle an erosion problem on the east side of the building...we put money there for the class that designed the project and they are out there in the dirt this week, shoveling, digging.*
- *Teachers really tried to cultivate the developmental growth of students and understanding of their own interior landscapes, how to manage themselves and how to recognize their own emotions and be able to articulate it.*

- *Engage students in the process of making choices about how they express an area of learning.*
- *[Students] take leadership roles in community events or parent nights.*
- *[Students] leading morning meetings and choosing to lead.*

How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?

9. What is your vision for this school and what drives you towards that vision?

This last question of the interview was intended to circle back to the original idea of what the principal's role is within the school but phrased in a way that is broader in scope towards the beliefs that motivate the principal to continue supporting student leadership. The responses provided insight that informed my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, and allowed the interviewees to express their deepest beliefs that cause them to continue leading their visions in their schools. As Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) expressed, the principal needs to believe in the vision and communicate the vision clearly through modeling and appropriate practices.

There were two main categories that emerged from the categorizations of statements and examples. The first category was that the vision was the underlying foundation for aligned resources, communication, and outcomes. From both interviewees, there were seven instances of statements and examples that represented this category. The interviewees provided theoretical philosophies of their beliefs around resource management and programming that were aligned to the vision they had for their schools. The second category was that positive future student outcomes were on the forefront of why principals continued to support student leadership, which

was represented by seven instances of statements and examples. Both interviewees expressed future-focused wishes of the types of students they wanted to see as products of their schools as well as what kinds of future leaders they hoped their students would grow up to become.

The following excerpts provide examples of the two final categories that concluded the interviews.

- *Those leadership skills and the character traits will grow...just to keep growing those three areas (prepared mind, physical fitness, and leadership), is my vision.*
- *My vision for this school is really quite simple, and it is just...it's a school, in which the staff and structure of the school, the programming, the structures by which we guide our day or our activities, [are] driving towards creating the qualities [in students].*
- *With it being the pivotal role as the principal in the building, helping to make decisions that shape the structure, shape the programming, shape the direction of very talented adult staff on how we are working together with our families and to really raise the kind of child who, as I said, they are critical and creative thinkers, are good [and] really grounded in the sense of ethics of what is right and wrong.*
- *We try to look at who is the person, not the test result, but who is the person that is coming out of this school.*
- *I'm looking for a longitudinal impact on a child's life.*
- *And they walk out of here and they are some of the most thoughtful, well-spoken young people stepping into high school and preparing themselves to be a part of, always a part of the community and always a part of making a community a better place either by example, or by word, or by action.*

The categories that emerged after focused coding were explained above in reference to the interview questions and the research question that it was aligned to. To better understand the categories, I also created a matrix and aligned the research questions, the interview questions, and the categories. The specific key statements and examples were grouped under each category but within this table, the key statements and examples were removed. Instead, I included the number of instances that key statements and examples represented the categories. Table 4.3 is shown as the following:

Table 4.3: Categories from Elite Interviews

<i>How do elementary school principals define student leadership?</i>	category		
1. As a principal, describe your role in this school?	main leader of the overall school vision Instances: 7	ensure that programming meets the demands of the students Instances: 3	ensure positive student outcomes Instances: 2
2. How would you describe what people might feel or see in this school?	positive student examples Instances: 2	feeling positive school climate Instances: 3	visually represented academics Instances: 4
3. How do you define student leadership?	students who were reflective Instances: 8	students were action-oriented Instances: 4	
<i>What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?</i>			
4. What is the school's role in developing student leadership?	support students to develop their identities to be		

	active members of the community Instances: 8		
5. In your opinion, how does developing leadership in students impact their character development?	grow leadership qualities Instances: 3	students needed to have a sense of identity so that they could practice being leaders in their own ways Instances: 4	
6. What leadership skills do you feel are most important for students to learn?	having a moral sense of responsibility Instances: 5	knowing yourself, including your strengths and limitations Instances: 3	understanding others Instances: 5
<i>What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?</i>			
7. Some principals believe that developing leadership in students involves providing opportunities and connecting students to the community, why do you think principals believe this?	students needed real-world applications of leadership Instances: 10	students needed to engage in service to others through community partnerships Instances: 3	
8. What are some specific school-wide practices that have supported leadership in students?	staff support for student leadership was essential Instances: 4	students needed to have active roles throughout the school Instances: 7	
<i>How do elementary school principals describe the role of</i>			

<i>schools in the development of leadership in students?</i>			
9. What is your vision for this school and what drives you towards that vision?	the vision was the underlying foundation for aligned resources, communication, and outcomes Instances: 7	positive future student outcomes were on the forefront of why principals continued to support student leadership Instances: 7	

Analysis and Summary of Field Observations

The third data collection method of my research was conducting field observations. In the field observations, I was a nonparticipant and did not engage in any interaction with the people or material objects and artifacts in the observation environment. I wanted my observation notes to be unbiased and unaffected by my presence so that I could nonjudgmentally find evidence to inform my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* and my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?.* My objective was to remain as unobtrusive and undetected as much as possible so that I could take field notes that would merely reflect actual artifacts and interactions occurring within the front entrance and office areas, which were not affected by my presence. Since the focus of my observations was on physical environment and brief interactions among participants, I did not conduct multiple observations in each observation site. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010), field observations typically occur over time

and over multiple observations in the field because part of the observation process involves revising the observer role after the initial observation and after subsequent observations because naturally occurring behaviors are being observed. Since field observations was one of the three data collection methods, I decided that my observations would only focus on the physical items and brief interactions that occurred around the front entrance and office areas to provide data representing a physical aspect to compare and contrast with the perception data gathered from the online survey and elite interviews.

The Observation Sites and Observation Parameters

Following the same process for identifying the elite interviewees, the observation sites were selected because they were sites in which the three elite interviewees worked. When the three elite interviewees were contacted for participation in the elite interviews, I also asked for permission to conduct observations within their front entrance and office areas. I explained the purpose of the observations and emphasized that I would only take notes on the physical environment, which would include the artifacts and any brief interactions that occurred in the physical space. I also assured the elite interviewees that there would be no identifying information shared within my dissertation on the school, the principal, the staff, and the students. Two of the elite interviewees gave permission for me to conduct observations. One of the elite interviewees did not give permission for me to conduct an observation but offered to give me a tour instead. I participated in the tour with this elite interviewee but I did not include this school site as an observation site since my presence was the main reason for the tour. The two elite interviewees who gave permission for the observations are listed below. However, I did not include a direct connection from the elite interviewees to their respective schools because I felt it was best for

maintaining my assurance to the interviewees that there would not be any identifying information of their schools.

Elite Interviewee A: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.8, which was the highest average of all the participants. This elite interviewee has been the principal at his school between four to six years but has been a principal for over ten years. This school is a school in a larger public school district in a midwestern urban city. In the response ratings for all of the question items, the ratings by this respondent were all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective.

Elite Interviewee C: This school principal had an overall individual total average of 4.66, which was the second highest average. This school is a school in a larger public school district in a midwestern suburb. This elite interviewee has been the principal at her school between one to three years and has worked as a principal for one to three years. In the response ratings for all of the question items in #7 through #19, the ratings by this respondent were almost all either a 4 or 5 out of the 5-point scale, with 5 designated as either very important or very effective. Only one question item received a rating of 3 but the overall average was still second highest because of more occurrences of 5 ratings on many of the question items.

The length of the observation and parameters to guide the observation were determined ahead of time. The observations were scheduled to occur within 15-20 minutes during the school day, which occurred as planned. The factors of size of physical space, colors of physical structures such as walls, doors, and windows, and available surface areas of walls, doors, and windows were not included in my notes because I considered these factors to be out of the sphere of control of the principals. I was interested in what was displayed within the physical spaces that would fall within the sphere of control of the principal and individuals who use the physical

spaces. In order to prevent any identifying information about the schools, I chose not to include any identifying school information within this section of the dissertation. Although I did record observation notes of artifacts with identifying school names, logos, and phrases as I saw them during my observations, I removed identifying information after completing the initial and focused coding stages. General logistics about each of the observation sites are presented as follows.

Field Observation A: This field observation occurred within 20 minutes prior to the scheduled interview with Interviewee A from 1:00-1:20, which was in the middle of the school day.

During this field observation, data was gathered by jotting notes of who was in the entrance and office areas of the school, the interactions between staff and students in the office and entrance area, and types of artifacts on the walls of the entrance and office areas.

Field Observation C: This field observation occurred within 20 minutes at the beginning of the school day from 8:25-8:55. The observation began right at the school start time and continued for 20 minutes after the school bell rang. The areas involved in the observation were the entrance and office areas of the school. I observed and jotted notes involving the interactions between staff and students as well as types of artifacts on the walls.

Description of Coding and Categorizing of Observations

During the initial coding of the notes from the observations, very specific terms were used to describe each item on the notes. I jotted observation notes by hand onto notebook paper so the notes resembled a long list of items with occasional scripting and descriptions of interactions. I also had notes of actual words and phrases as they were written scattered throughout the notes with occasional drawings of shapes or artifacts to capture as best as possible

the items in the physical space. My notes contained many references that would identify the schools, so I needed to be aware of this before moving into the coding stages.

I read through my notes prior to beginning the coding process. Then I read through the notes line by line and sometimes by chunks of notes related to specific items while jotting terms to create a code for the item. After completing the initial coding on the observation notes, I read through my notes with the codes again, without jotting or changing codes before moving on to focused coding. Next, I read through the observation notes with the intention to categorize the codes and the items within the codes. Then I read through the categories with the grouped codes and items within the codes to gain a better perspective of the categories. Finally, the categories were organized, corresponding to the research questions and included the number of occurrences from the items. Table 4.4 is shown as the following:

Table 4.4: Categories from Observations

Research Question	Categories		
<i>How do elementary school principals define student leadership?</i>	Inspirational quotes Instances: 5	Communication of important information Instances: 11	
<i>What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?</i>	Display of Student Artwork Instances: 3	Display of photos of Students Instances: 2	
<i>What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?</i>	Positive interactions Instances: 10	Posting Leadership Opportunities Instances: 2	
<i>How do elementary school principals</i>	Recognition boards Instances: 3	Positive Messaging on walls	Welcoming materials Instances: 10

<i>describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?</i>		Instances: 5	
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Summary of Theoretical Sampling

After the data from each of the data collection methods went through initial coding and focused coding, the categories from each of the data collection methods were combined. I wanted to “elaborate and refine the categories” so that I could reach a level at which no new properties emerged as Charmaz (2014) explained about theoretical sampling. I needed to take the combined categories through further focused coding and categorizing so that I could elaborate and study the properties that existed within the categories. In order to do this, I returned to my research questions as the central focus for reviewing, refining, and sorting the categories. I wanted to be sure that my research questions, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*, *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*, remained at the forefront to remind me of the purpose for all of the research. This section provides a description of the ways I reorganized the existing categories and how defining and checking my categories provided deeper insights, which helped me arrive at the resulting themes.

Description of Saturation and Sorting of Categories

To begin, I reorganized all of the categories from the online survey, the interviews, and the observations into one spreadsheet aligned under each research question under which it

originally emerged. Even though the online survey questions were not developed to directly reflect the four research questions, the findings from the survey ratings provided significant insight into the perceptions of principals. The open-ended questions provided reliable responses that could be coded and then sorted under categories, which reflected the significance of the survey ratings. The categories from the interviews and the observations were already organized under the research questions.

Once all of the categories were placed on the spreadsheet, the sheer number of categories provided good information for each of the questions, but the similarities were glaring. Thus, I began re-categorizing to refine the categories into other categories that would represent the similarities better. I also added the number of instances each category had a statement, example, artifact, or label representing it. This data can be found in the earlier sections in more detail, however, for this spreadsheet, I only needed the number written in each cell with each category. Since the matrix was created on a Google Sheet, I was able to apply conditional formatting to the matrix which colored every cell with the same number of instances the same colors. What appeared was a fully color-coded table that made finding similarities, trends, and patterns much easier. The following table is shown in it's color-coded format to provide a visual reference of how I used the information on Table 4.5 to inform my next steps of categorizing.

Table 4.5: Combined Categories Per Research Questions

<i>How do elementary school principals define student leadership?</i>	<i>What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?</i>	<i>What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?</i>	<i>How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?</i>
main leader of the overall vision 7	support students to develop their identities to be active members of the community 8	students needed real-world applications of leadership 10	the vision was the underlying foundation for aligned resources, communication, and outcomes 7
ensure that programming meets the demands of the students 3	grow leadership qualities 3	students needed to engage in service to others through community partnerships 3	positive future student outcomes were on the forefront of why principals continued to support student leadership 7
ensure positive student outcomes 2	students needed to have a sense of identity so that they could practice being leaders in their own ways 4	staff support for student leadership was essential 4	recognition boards 3
positive student examples 2	having a moral sense of responsibility 5	students needed to have active roles throughout the school 7	positive messaging on walls 5
feeling positive school climate 3	knowing yourself, including your strengths and limitations 3	positive interactions 10	welcoming materials for students and visitors 10
visually represented academics 4	understanding others 5	posting leadership opportunities 2	
students who were reflective 8	display of student artwork 3	provide student leadership roles 3	
students were action-oriented 4	display of photos of students 2	develop community connections and global learning 5	
inspirational quotes 5	support student-led activities 2	provide opportunities for student leadership 3	
communication of important information for students and visitors 11	support students in learning leadership 4	connect students in the community 1	
	develop character and strengths in students 5		

My next step in categorizing included more focused work in reviewing the patterns, trends, and similarities to develop categories that would better represent clusters of the current categories. In order to organize the overwhelming categories that were generated from the focused coding of the online surveys, elite interviews, and field observations, I started to label each category with the word that best represented the idea or action of the category. Upon doing this, I ended up with six labels that emerged from thirty-two separate categories. The labels became clearer to define as the categories were sorted under each label. Common meanings and ideas developed as each category was added to the label, making the labels more defined. Then the common ideas, actions, and characteristics of what was in each category gave meaning to a phrase that represented the categories. The labels are presented as follows with their phrases representing characteristics of categories.

Categories had the idea, action, or characteristics of:

Communication	Providing positive messaging to students, families, and staff
Community	Building up or being connected in a community
Guidance	Supporting leadership growth through learning opportunities
Engagement	Connecting with real-world outcomes through leadership opportunities
Self Awareness	Creating identity with moral character and responsibility
Vision	Aligning resources with clear goals

To continue with theoretical sampling until I could reach a level that Charmaz (2014) describes as saturation, I needed to gather fresh data by checking for other patterns or trends within the categories. I replaced the original categories in Table 4.5 with the labels that the categories represented. When I did this, I discovered that there were more patterns and trends

that emerged. Table 4.6 presents the labels replacing their representing categories organized under the research question that the original categories developed from.

Table 4.6: Labeled Categories Per Research Questions

<i>How do elementary school principals define student leadership?</i>	<i>What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?</i>	<i>What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?</i>	<i>How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?</i>
Vision	Engagement	Engagement	Vision
Guidance	Guidance	Community	Engagement
Engagement	Guidance	Guidance	Self Awareness
Engagement	Self Awareness	Engagement	Communication
Community	Self Awareness	Community	Community
Guidance	Self Awareness	Engagement	
Self Awareness	Guidance	Guidance	
Guidance	Self Awareness	Community	
Communication	Engagement	Guidance	
Communication	Guidance	Engagement	
	Self Awareness		

One trend that emerged was that there were more occurrences of some labels and less of others. The occurrences were counted to look for any significance of the differences. The counted occurrences are presented as follows:

Number of occurrences:

Communication	3
Community	5

Guidance	10
Engagement	9
Self Awareness	7
Vision	2

The fact that Guidance had ten occurrences and Engagement had nine occurrences was an interesting trend. Guidance was defined as supporting leadership growth through learning opportunities and Engagement was defined as connecting with real-world outcomes through leadership opportunities. Both of these labels implied that there was action involved with students and staff doing something, which in this case meant that students were taking leadership opportunities and staff were providing leadership opportunities. This data trend reflected the trend that was also existent with the online surveys and the elite interviews. In the online survey data, respondents to the survey rated the importance of providing leadership opportunities as a total average rating of 4.78, with 5 signifying “very important”. When compared to the actual frequency of students experiencing leadership roles, the total average rating was a 3.11 out of a 5-point scale. Respondents also rated the importance of teachers providing leadership opportunities as a total average rating of 4.44, with 5 signifying “very important”. The total average rating of actual teacher usage of strategies for using varied leadership opportunities was 3.22 out of a 5-point scale. This difference in ratings between the perception of importance and the perception of actual experience portrayed the common discrepancy between initiative and implementation.

The remaining labels also presented interesting trends. Self-Awareness had seven occurrences and Community had five occurrences. Self-Awareness was defined as creating identity with moral character and responsibility and community was defined as building up or

being connected in a community. Both of these labels referred to the ability of students to know themselves so they could lead in the community. The last two labels were broader ideas.

Communication had three occurrences and Vision had two occurrences. Communication was defined as providing positive messaging to students, families, and staff while Vision was defined as aligning resources with clear goals. These last two labels addressed broad ideas that involved a wider scope of impact.

In my review of the definitions of the labels and the connections between labels in this trend of occurrences, I saw that there was a pattern between occurrences and the breadth of what each label entailed. There was an opposite direction of occurrences compared with breadth of each label. My interpretation of what the occurrences signified was that occurrences could be related to the level of importance. At this point, I considered the labels as the new categories that were formed from reorganizing the previous categories. I also reorganized the categories in order of occurrence from lowest to highest to show the trend.

Vision	Aligning resources with clear goals
Communication	Providing positive messaging to students, families, and staff
Community	Building up or being connected in a community
Self Awareness	Creating identity with moral character and responsibility
Engagement	Connecting with real-world outcomes through leadership opportunities
Guidance	Supporting leadership growth through learning opportunities

Resulting Themes

Before I could determine themes from the categories, I decided to check the categories under each of the research questions for any other possible trends or patterns. The categories were reorganized according to number of occurrences overall with lowest overall occurrence

categories at the top to the highest overall occurrence categories. Then, the number of occurrences of each category under each research question was added. Finally, each category was color coded to provide a visual difference. I discovered that the categories were all important in addressing my primary question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?* and my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*, *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. The reorganized categories are shown in Table 4.7, corresponding to the research questions.

Table 4.7: Labeled Categories with Number of Occurrences Per Question

<i>How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?</i>	<i>How do elementary school principals define student leadership?</i>	<i>What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?</i>	<i>What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?</i>
Vision=1	Vision=1		
Communication=1	Communication=2		
Community=1	Community=1		Community=3
Self Awareness=1	Self Awareness=1	Self Awareness=5	
Engagement=1	Engagement=2	Engagement=1	Engagement=4
	Guidance=3	Guidance=4	Guidance=3

Overall, the categories of Vision, Communication, Community, Self Awareness, and Engagement were present in addressing my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*. An interesting discovery was that Guidance did not show up in addressing my primary research

question. Instead Guidance, along with Engagement, Self Awareness, and Community were present under the secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*, *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. When I used the phrase definitions of the categories instead of the labeled categories, I gained further insight into the specific functions and roles within each of the categories and the three themes emerged. The themes are listed with their corresponding categories as follows:

Theme 1: The principal should focus on aligning resources and providing positive communication.

- Aligning resources with clear goals
- Providing positive messaging to students, families, and staff

Theme 2: The staff and students should build connections within the community that will develop moral identities.

- Building up or being connected in a community
- Creating identity with moral character and responsibility

Theme 3: The students should develop leadership through real-world experiences.

- Connecting with real-world outcomes through leadership opportunities
- Supporting leadership growth through

These three themes emerged from the final check on how the categories and definitions were able to address my research questions. Through a review of data and findings from the online survey, elite interviews, and field observations, I found that data supported these three themes. As I sorted and integrated my memos from each of the data collection methods, I also found memos that were written asking the questions about the principal's role and what the

impact would be on the development of student leadership. My memos that I jotted around student outcomes also showed my thoughts about real-world application of skills and how leadership would be developed best through real world experiences. Finally, in checking on Theme 2: The staff and students should build connections within the community that will develop moral identities, I reflected on the data from all three data collection methods that had many instances of staff and students working together and building connections as well as learning to lead together. Overall, I felt I was finally at a point that Charmaz (2014) would consider as a point in which my data analysis was robust and my themes were substantiated enough to move on to building a theory.

Constructed Grounded Theory

Throughout my grounded theory research process, I engaged in a series of moving among data collection and data analysis. This cyclical movement between stages of data analysis as shown in Figure 4.2 should be noted as full of instances of interpretation, guessing, creating, sorting, and repeating again when a new interpretation of the data emerged. This left much of my data up for personal interpretation as I searched for coding terms, meanings for categories, and reorganizing of categories. In the end, the themes that emerged had done so out of much data interpretation. Maxwell (2013) states that researcher bias is expected in qualitative research and explaining how possible bias was dealt with brings integrity to the research. I have stated bias starting in Chapter One and throughout data analysis within this chapter. However, since my research resembled constructivist grounded theory, the “constructivist approach theorizes the interpretive work that research participants do, but also acknowledges that the resulting theory is an interpretation” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 239).

My theory stemmed right from the themes that emerged from my interpretations of what the categories meant. Furthermore, to substantiate the theory would mean to provide a review of all of the data findings from the online survey, elite interviews, and field observations. My research questions were *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*, *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. I aimed to answer these questions as best as possible and concluded my research with this theory: Schools develop student leadership when principals align resources and provide positive communication, staff and students connect within the community and develop moral identities, and students develop leadership through real-world experiences. This theory can apply to any school that wants to develop student leadership.

Summary

This research followed a grounded theory process that was driven by my primary research question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*, and my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership?*, *What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?*, and *What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?* The grounded theory process included repeated cycles of moving between data collection to data analysis, while engaged in writing and integrating memos. Although the grounded theory process was not linear in practice, the process started with the data collection methods, then data analysis stages included initial coding, focused coding and categorization,

and theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2014). After themes developed from theoretical sampling, I was able to construct a theory and integrate my memos into this write up.

There were three data collection methods used. The first data collection method was online surveys of twelve elementary school principals, of which nine elementary school principals participated. The second data collection method was elite interviews of two out of three selected elite interviewees. The third data collection method was field observations of the front entrance and office areas of two of the three selected field observation sites. After each data collection method was completed, data analysis included initial coding and several iterations of focused coding and categorizing. I shared significant findings the data analysis from each of the data collection methods. Through triangulation of data between all three data collection methods, I was able to compare and contrast the findings in a comprehensive process (Maxwell, 2013).

There were a total of thirty-six different categories that resulted from all three data collection methods after focused coding and categorizing. The thirty-six categories were reorganized into six categories that became three themes. The six labeled categories were Vision, Communication, Community, Self Awareness, Engagement, and Guidance. The three themes that emerged were 1) The principal should focus on aligning resources and providing positive communication, 2) The staff and students should build connections within the community that will develop moral identities, and 3) The students should develop leadership through real-world experiences. The three themes that emerged were the basis of my constructed grounded theory: First, schools develop student leadership when principals align resources and provide positive communication; Second, staff and students connect within the community and develop moral identities; and Third, students develop leadership through real-world experiences.

In Chapter Five, I share further connections from the literature and the major concepts from the literature review in Chapter Two to my research and theory. I will also share implications for future research, limitations of this research, and provide my final reflections.

CHAPTER 5

An empowered organization is one in which individuals have the knowledge, skill, desire and opportunity to personally succeed in a way that leads to collective organizational success.

-Stephen Covey

Summary of Insights

My interest in this research developed out of my curiosity and passion for developing leadership in others. My leadership philosophy had been to lead by example and to inspire others to lead. Since I became an elementary school principal four years ago, I began to see the untapped leadership potential in elementary students. I wanted to see students leading within the school in ways that would make a big impact on the school as well as on the lives of students. After realizing that many elementary principals agreed with me that students needed to learn leadership skills but not many were willing to lead school-wide efforts to develop leadership in students, I questioned whether elementary school principals needed to have particular leadership skills themselves in order to lead the school to develop leadership in students or if there was a particular combination of beliefs and practices required to develop leadership in students. This led me to my interest in this research in order to answer the question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in developing leadership in students?* and to address more specifically my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?.* This chapter provides further connections from the literature and the major concepts from the literature review in Chapter Two to my research and theory. I will also share implications for future research, limitations of this research, and provide my final reflections in this chapter.

My research was conducted using a grounded theory approach, which involved many instance of looping back and forth between the stages of the grounded theory process (Charmaz, 2014). I used three data collection methods. One method was to conduct online surveys, in which nine of the twelve elementary principals completed the surveys. The second method involved conducting elite interviews, in which two out of three of the selected interviewees participated. The third data collection method was to complete field observations of the front entrance and office areas of two out of three selected field observation sites. Triangulating the data between three data collection methods helped me find similarities and differences that helped make my data more reliable (Maxwell, 2013). Data from all three data collection methods were analyzed and constantly compared through initial coding, focused coding and categorizing, and theoretical sampling.

After theoretical sampling, six categories that culminated from further categorizing transformed into three themes which led to my constructed grounded theory: Schools develop student leadership when principals align resources and provide positive communication, staff and students connect within the community and develop moral identities, and students develop leadership through real-world experiences. This theory portrays the beliefs of elementary school principals through practical examples of what actions would need to occur with principals, staff, and students. The essential role of the elementary school principal was validated throughout the research with data from all three data collection methods. The research was conducted with public schools in larger public school systems and public charter schools, however the theory is appropriate for any type of school if the principal embraces the theory and reflects the theory in practice. The theory, along with research findings aligned to several areas within the literature review in Chapter Two are presented in three subsections. Each subsection provides brief

insights on the particular group of focus and the expected task of each group within a school to develop student leadership.

The Principal: Align Resources and Provide Positive Communication

In Chapter Two, the literature on the role of the principal touched on three important areas. Those areas were instructional leadership, school climate and culture, and communication and collaboration. My research findings showed agreement with some of the concepts in these three areas as well as contrasting or missing information. Leithwood & Montgomery (1982) point out that the effectiveness of a principal directly impacts the school culture and climate, curriculum and pedagogy, and student achievement. The ability of principals to view their roles in connection to how well the school is doing with the level of community, positive culture and climate, and student learning determines their effectiveness.

Sergiovanni (2009) argued that principals felt their most important role was to be an instructional leader. Throughout the codings and categories from the online surveys, elite interviews, and field observations, academics and instructional leadership were not reflected as major areas of focus. In fact, within the elite interviews, the first question asked of principals was to describe their role in the school. Principals only mentioned academics as something that was important but could be shown through art displays.

In regards to the principal's role in school climate and culture, some elements connected with the research data quite well. School culture can be described as the shared norms, beliefs, values, and attitudes of people within the school while school climate can be described as the shared perceptions and total environmental quality within the school (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). Peterson and Deal (1998) describe a positive school culture as an environment with shared understanding of what is important, shared sense of care and concern among members,

and shared commitment to student learning. During the elite interviews, the responses to the question, *How would you describe what people might feel or see in this school?*, were categorized as seeing positive student example, feeling positive school climate, and seeing visually represented academic learning. These three categories portrayed concepts that would be considered in describing school culture and climate.

The third area from the literature review that was explained as being important for the role of the principal was communication and collaboration. This area was reflected throughout all three data collection methods. Data from the research suggested that principals were the main leaders of the overall vision and they communicated clear and positive messages reflecting the culture and vision of the school to students, staff and parents.

In summarizing how principals align resources and provide positive communication, the brain metaphor described by Morgan (1998) best represents this portion of the theory as it pertains to the school. Morgan (1998) presents the brain metaphor as a system of points of receiving input and feedback in order to extend and enhance processes. This means that the principal would need to collect, store, and evaluate data and processes in many teams throughout the school simultaneously so that patterns, trends, and new learning emerge. The principal would make decisions on appropriate adjustments and alignment needs with all the resources throughout school. In relation to the development of student leadership, principals regard their roles as the center that would need to ensure all the connections between resources, teams, and efforts. In order to do this well, principals would need to be the main leader of the vision that would serve as the purpose for alignment. Communication of positive messages and recognition of positive examples showcasing efforts towards the vision would be the way that connections and motivations could happen among the entire school community. Leithwood & Montgomery

(1982) present that the principal should orient the school program and resources to the shared goals within the community. This leads into the next groups within the school community that are important to focus on, which are the staff and students.

The Staff and Students: Connect within the Community and Develop Moral Identities

Just like principals must understand the importance of building community and must be aware of their own values, strengths, and weaknesses in order to communicate their efforts and expectations clearly (Rosch & Kusel, 2010), staff and students must also understand their roles in a community and the moral responsibility of being in a community. The elite interviews provided the most insight on this concept. In fact, the elite interviewees both expressed the need for students to know themselves, know their strengths, and know their weaknesses so they would be able to understand others and how they can work in other communities. The interviewees also expressed a lot of desire for students to work towards being of service to others. This reflects the notion expressed by Block (2008) that individuals in a community need to be owners in the community and not just consumers. Staff and students who feel connected in a community would contribute towards making the community better. Hence, they work towards supporting one another.

Another related component to this part of the theory is that staff and students need to develop social emotional learning skills so that they will have strong moral character. The 2013 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) guide (2012), has five interrelated cognitive, affective, and behavioral competencies that must exist for students in effective social emotional learning programs: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Of these five competencies, the one that was most represented by the data from this research was self-awareness, which includes

being able to recognize one's emotions, strengths, and limitations and having a healthy sense of confidence. There were multiple occurrences of the "Self Awareness" category throughout all of the data collection methods. During the online survey, respondents provided many statements within the open-ended question items that reflected the development of character, identity, and morals. In the elite interviews, the principals expressed similar perspectives of students developing their self-identities and showing moral responsibility. The value of integrity was mentioned by one principal as being the most important factor that defined how leadership impacts moral character. Even the artifacts observed during the field observations included many items that were aimed at developing self-awareness in students. Some examples of these artifacts were displays of student photographs, recognition boards showcasing accomplishments of students, and messages asking students how they can lead or help someone.

Senge (2006) presents the idea that to be a part of an organization requires healthy reflection and growth of individuals because when individuals reach for personal mastery, they strengthen the whole learning organization. This component of the theory from my research states that staff and students need to be connected in the community and supported to develop moral identities. There is a need within the schools for principals to focus on interpersonal relationships among teachers and to develop a school environment that encourages experimentation and reflection (Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). In schools, principals need to encourage staff and students toward personal growth, personal vision, and ownership. By doing this, staff and students develop a sense of belonging within the community that helps them support one another (Block, 2008; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982; Senge, 2009).

The Students: Develop Leadership Through Real-World Experiences

The final component of the theory focuses on the students as recipients of provided opportunities and as active seekers of opportunities. The school may provide opportunities for students to engage in leadership within the school but there is also an expectation that students will be active in seeking and engaging in opportunities out in the local, national, and global community. It may be necessary for schools to educate students to understand real-world problems and to show compassion, care, concern, and respect for these real-world problems. However, schools should also teach students to learn facts about history in order to think historically in ways that students will be engaged in moral reasoning enough to motivate them to act (Reimers, 2006).

The data from all three data collection methods highlighted the importance of having student leadership opportunities. The rating questions on the online survey showed that principals felt strongly that students should have leadership opportunities and the open-ended questions provided qualitative data that confirmed this feel from principals. Through the elite interviews, it became even more apparent that providing student leadership opportunities was important but connecting students to leadership opportunities in the surrounding and global communities outside of school was emphasized even more. The field observation data involved visual artifacts that encouraged involvement in and outside of the school community with opportunities listed, such as leadership opportunities in the school and partnerships outside of school.

The main consideration with this component of the theory that focuses on students developing leadership through real-world experiences is that students are leading alongside teachers. Students are expected to have the awareness of themselves to know their strengths and

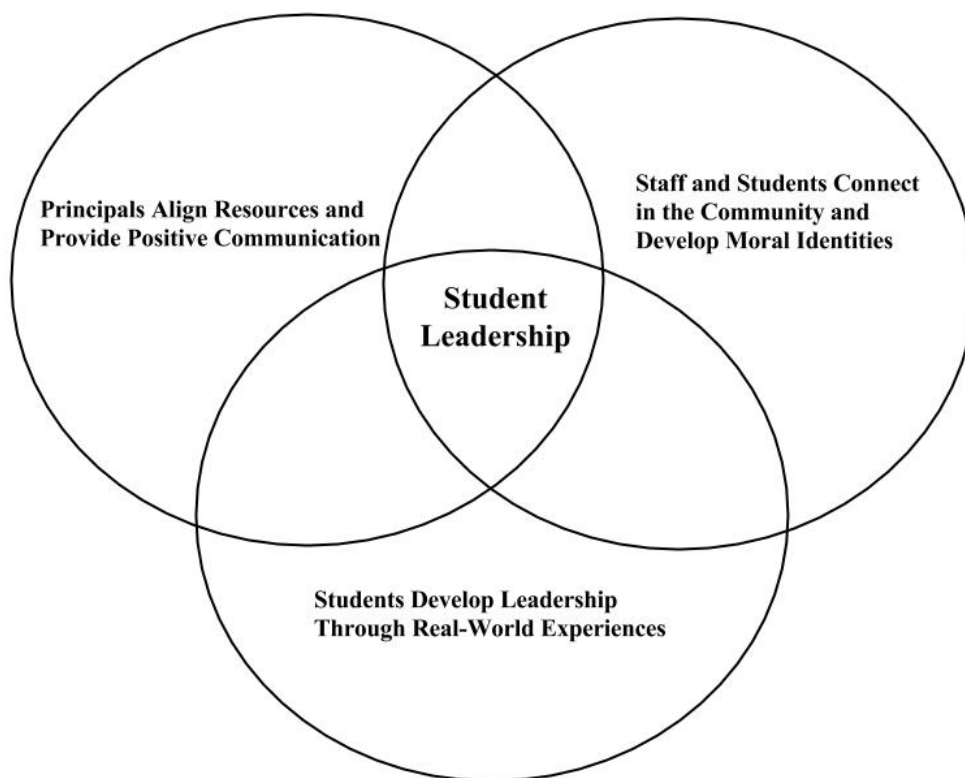
areas for growth. This assumes that students would need to be mindful of themselves and their impact on others. Marturano (2015) presents that focus, clarity, creativity, and compassion are four fundamentals that originate from the heart and mind. These four fundamentals can be strengthened and cultivated through mindful leadership training and practice. Getting to mindful leadership excellence would involve a practice of meditation and a constructivist-like learning approach, even in the midst of a chaotic environment (Marturano, 2015).

Leadership has historically been portrayed as a big act or something reserved for only a few people and this must change. What this theory from my research implies is that leadership should be accessible to all students just like curriculum and instruction should be accessible to all students. Students who know their strengths or who are growing strengths should be given leadership opportunities that would best match their strengths and interests. Block (2003) reminds us to view students as highly variable human beings so that we can get to know each student as an individual with social, cultural, and emotional differences. By doing this, we can customize leadership opportunities within and outside of the school to the particular areas of strength and interest of students much like how Dong (2014) explains how we can use background knowledge about students to tailor instruction to meet their needs.

The simplest way to summarize the insights about this theory from my research is to visualize the three components of the theory as interconnected and interdependent circles like the grounded theory data analysis stages. In order to develop student leadership, a school must have a principal who aligns resources and provides positive communication about learning and leading, staff and students who are connected within the community and develop moral identities through reflection, and students who develop leadership in real-world experiences with

compassion. This visual is represented in Figure 5.1 to show the interconnected components with student leadership as the focal vision.

Figure 5.1: The Interconnected Components of Developing Student Leadership



Implications for Future Research

My research was focused on studying the perceptions of elementary school principals in relation to developing student leadership. I wanted to address my primary question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in developing leadership in students?* and to address more specifically my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?* I did not expect to find specific explanations or definitions as answers to my research questions. Instead I learned a lot about how the beliefs of principals can drive the

direction of the school towards developing student leadership. The theory that developed out of my research captures the importance of having clear vision and creating an interconnected system, as described by Senge (2006).

The role of the principal as the main leader of the vision for student leadership stands out as one of the significant areas for more research. There is a substantial amount of research on the role of the principal in regards to effective leadership and program improvement and academic achievement (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Ediger, 2014; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982), but research on the specific role of the principal in schools focused on developing student leadership was not found. Further research on the role of the principal including a study of what kinds of values and beliefs principals who push for student leadership have, the particular actions and decisions that are affected by their beliefs, and how principals developed such values and beliefs would provide a lot more understanding of how the principal truly impacts the development of student leadership.

Another area in need for further research is the concept of student leadership. I believe the concept of student leadership as a part of social emotional learning and a leverage towards academic success is a relatively new concept. Even in informal questioning of what is student leadership to my colleagues who are principals, the responses have usually reflected the examples of student councils, teacher-selected students who display leadership qualities, and classroom helpers. I argue that student leadership must go beyond letting just a few select students help to a more equitable and accessible system of leadership that gives every student a chance to be involved and to chose how to be involved. Education Direction (2015) conducted a nation-wide survey of 669 principals to learn about their perspectives around social emotional

learning, student leadership, and in particular, *The Leader in Me*, as a student leadership framework. The findings from this survey showed that *The Leader in Me* was a successful model and had a unique value of developing student leadership capabilities and transforming school culture. Still, I believe the misconception of student leadership as a program rather than a framework for guiding whole-school change has caused a high misrepresentation of student leadership in schools. Further research around student leadership in its framework representation would provide a lot of insight into the actual student leadership opportunities that exist in schools.

There is also a need to research what specific practices exist in schools that would be considered leadership opportunities. Based on my online survey, there was a discrepancy between the perception of principals that providing leadership opportunities was important and the perception of principals that students were actually experiencing leadership opportunities. This discrepancy has caused me to wonder if the concept of student leadership opportunities was understood in the same way by all the participants in my research. Connected to this question of what is understood as student leadership opportunities, is the implication on student voice. Further research could address student voice with surveys, interviews, and observations of students who are currently enrolled, recently completed, or recently graduated to gather responses and data on how students describe student leadership opportunities.

Finally, there could be future research done to address the question, *How does the development of student leadership impact future ethical leadership?*. This is a broad question that I had originally wanted to include in my research questions but given the scope of my research, I was not going to be gathering any data related to the future impact of student leadership. During the elite interviews, the interviewees both alluded to the idea of seeing future

outcomes in students, such as seeing that students would be confident, prepared for future education, and accomplished in careers. However, neither one of the interviewees provided examples of former students who had become ethical leaders as a result of the student leadership development they received. This may be due to the fact that student leadership, as a concept, is relatively new in schools. As student leadership becomes more prevalent and develops a longer history of being in schools, future research to correlate the leadership qualities of people to the development of leadership they had in elementary schools would be valuable.

Limitations of This Research

A limitation of this research includes the size of the samples for the online surveys, elite interviews, and field observations. Each of the data collection methods used posed some challenges in data analysis because of the low number of participants. I limited my research to only include schools that either displayed evidence of social emotional learning and/or leadership in the midwestern metro area. This selective search of schools provided an original list of fifteen schools, of which only twelve schools were able to be contacted for participation in the online survey. Eventually, only nine schools participated in the online survey. After the online surveys were analyzed, only three principals were selected for elite interviews, of which only two principals agreed to participate. The field observations were at two school sites. Even though the data collected from each of the data collection methods were substantial in quantity, the sample sizes for each data collection method were still quite small. There were only two elite interviewees and two field observation sites. Thus, the data gathered was significant but the analysis and conclusion from such a small sample size should not be generalized. The ability to triangulate the data from all three data collection methods helped to validate the data, even with a small sample size. If I had limited the data collection methods to only using surveys, my data

would have consisted of self-reported responses only. By using online survey along with interviews and observations, I was able to compare and contrast data from the interviews and observations with the self-reported responses within the survey.

Another limitation of this research was that I should have incorporated an observation of the interactions between the principal and the staff and students. In the field observations, I only collected observations on physical environment and brief interactions between staff and students or students and students. Neither of the field observations included interactions of the principals with staff and/or students. In retrospect, collecting observation field notes over multiple observations of interactions and artifacts would have provided a lot of rich data to compare with the elite interviews.

One limitation that I previously mentioned as a limitation for this research was that there was very minimal research available on developing student leadership. This was a limitation for the research and a limitation of the research. I had to rely on research in many other fields with some connections to the role of the principal, school community, and leadership. Since there was no research showing tangible outcomes in previous research in this area, I felt that my bias for student leadership may have affected the data interpretation more than I may have been aware of. This poses the question of how much research bias may have been involved. Even though Maxwell (2013) claims that researcher bias is acceptable as long as it is explained that it existed and may have affected the research, I felt my bias may have tried to fill in where there was lack of previous research or relevant research to guide me.

Final Reflections

This research helped me understand student leadership through the perceptions of other principals. I learned a lot about how the beliefs of principals can drive the direction of the school

towards developing student leadership. My research was focused on addressing my primary question, *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in developing leadership in students?* and my secondary questions, *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*. The theory derived from this research was one that I felt addressed my research questions and was developed out of a solid grounded theory process.

I followed my grounded theory process as it was visually represented in Figure 3.1 and had several moments of uncertainty. The questions of whether I was doing initial coding correctly or whether I had done enough focused coding and categorizing occurred often. I had to rely on Charmaz (2014), Maxwell (2013), and McMillan & Schumacher (2010) quite often to reassure myself of when enough coding and categorizing had happened. Charmaz (2014) described constructivism as a solid way to do grounded theory, which meant that my interpretations and researcher bias were acceptable and necessary in order to arrive at a theory that was substantiated by my data and grounded in my literature review. I also followed the data analysis stages as visually represented in Figure 4.1. I did grapple with the analytic problem and wondered if I was applying the correct process within theoretical sampling. However, Charmaz (2014) provided encouragement for me to continue with her statement that “feeling confused and uncertain-but learning to tolerate the ambiguity-shows your growth as a researcher” (p. 212).

The theory from this research did address my research questions but further research may be needed to generate further specific steps and practices that would represent the belief of each component. My grounded theory is “Schools develop student leadership when principals align resources and provide positive communication, staff and students connect within the community

and develop moral identities, and students develop leadership through real-world experiences”. In keeping with the similarity of how the grounded theory process had overlapping stages, the theory was represented as three interconnected circles, as in Figure 5.1.

What I learned from the perspectives shared from principals through the online surveys and elite interviews was that there needed to be an underlying passion within principals if they wanted to lead the school to develop student leadership. Schools may continue to change just as curriculum and standards continue to change, but students will continue to come to school with the desire to learn and be successful. It should be our passion as educators to nurture that desire and develop each student’s potential. We need to believe that our students will be successful and we need to be willing to support our students to reach their full potential. Our current school communities and future communities of our students would benefit more from students who have been nurtured to develop social, emotional, academic, and leadership potentials.

My interest in developing leadership in others is what led me to this research. Prior to this research, my focus on student leadership included a heavy emphasis on teaching leadership skills. As an elementary school principal, I felt that a strong foundation in servant leadership, as defined by Northouse (2013) that leaders needed to be attentive to their followers “and lead in ways that serve the greater good of the organization, community, and society at large” (p. 219), was what I wanted to develop in students. What I learned about developing student leadership from this research is that developing leadership in students should start from developing self-awareness and self identity within students. When students know themselves well, they will be better leaders. I was reminded that students with more self-awareness would be able to define what it means to do the right thing because they will lead from the heart. I realized that

developing leadership in others requires more than teaching leadership skills and providing leadership opportunities.

This important reminder led me to conclude that the outcome of developing student leaders should be to develop authentic leadership, which means leaders should have healthy self-awareness, moral perspectives, strong ethics, and a willingness to learn from leading (Northouse, 2013). Developing authentic leadership is a lifetime process, so why not start with elementary students? The beginning of learning to lead others requires learning to lead oneself. As I reflect on the quote by Stephen Covey at the beginning of this chapter, I agree with the idea that personal success was essential for obtaining collective organizational success (Covey, 2004; Senge, 2006). Among many other lingering questions, one question is, how do we best develop personal success in students and staff? I hope this research, which yielded the theory that “Schools develop student leadership when principals align resources and provide positive communication, staff and students connect within the community and develop moral identities, and students develop leadership through real-world experiences”, provides a platform for future research to expand on this relatively new concept of student leadership.

APPENDIX A: EMAIL NOTIFICATION OF ONLINE SURVEY

Hello (Participant Name),

(Greeting pertaining to conversation on telephone to receive email). I am the principal at Weaver Elementary in ISD622 and so I'm grateful that there are schools like yours that are already focused on building student leadership.

My request today is a personal one. I am working on research for my dissertation "How School Principals Describe the School's Role in Developing Leadership in Student." I hope you are willing to participate in my research. Schools were chosen that had identifying terms or phrases within the mission, vision, or school description that relate to building leadership in students. Your school was one of the selected schools.

The survey will take 20-30 minutes to complete. I ask that you complete the survey by March 17. I will forever be grateful to you for completing it. After completion, I may contact you for further information and participation in an interview, if needed.

Here is the link: [SURVEY on How Principals Describe the School's Role in Developing Leadership in Students.](#)

Thank you so much for your time and perspective!

APPENDIX B: ONLINE SURVEY

Survey on the School's Role in Developing Leadership in Students

As a school leader, you have much influence on the culture, climate, and achievement within the school. Your participation in this survey is voluntary but very important to me. Thank you for taking this survey!

I am completing a doctorate in education at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN and I am currently working on my dissertation. This survey is one research method informing my dissertation focused on my primary research question, "How do school principals describe the school's role in developing leadership in students?" Your responses may be used in furthering my research and may be included in my dissertation but will not be identified with you. There is little to no risk involved in participating in this survey. Your identity will be protected. Neither your name nor identifying characteristics will appear in the dissertation. All results will be confidential and anonymous. You may decide not to participate at any time without negative consequences.

1. 1. What is your school's name?

2. 2. What is your first and last name?

3. 3. What is your title or position?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Executive Director
- ☐ Director
- ☐ Board Member (or Chair)
- ☐ Other: _____

4. 4. How many years are you in your current position?

Mark only one oval.

- ☐ 1-3 years
- ☐ 4-6 years
- ☐ 7-9 years
- ☐ 10 or more years

32. Vision for Student Leadership*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

13. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel ongoing professional development has been provided to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership?

33. Vision for Social Emotional Learning*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

34. Vision for Student Leadership*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

14. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel school-wide policies are integrated in school activities to attain the vision for social emotional learning and student leadership?

35. Vision for Social Emotional Learning*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

36. Vision for Student Leadership*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all effective	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very effective

15. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very effective” and 1 is “not at all effective”), how effective do you feel data on school climate

43. Students are given leadership opportunities*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

17. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel STUDENTS experience the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership at your school?

44. Students are connected to other students*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very often

45. Students are connected to adults*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very often

46. Students are supported*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very often

47. Students are challenged*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very often

48. Students are given leadership opportunities*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very often

18. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very important” and 1 is “not at all important”), how important do you feel it is for

TEACHERS to use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school?

49. Student-centered teaching and learning strategies

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

50. Culturally and linguistically responsive strategies

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

51. Differentiated tasks and activities

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

52. Varied student leadership opportunities

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

19. On a five-point scale (where 5 is “very often” and 1 is “not at all”), how often do you feel TEACHERS use the following aspects of social and emotional learning and student leadership in their teaching at your school?

53. Student-centered teaching and learning strategies

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

54. Culturally and linguistically responsive strategies

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

55. Differentiated tasks and activities*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

56. Varied student leadership opportunities*Mark only one oval.*

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not at all important	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Very important

57. 20. What is one statement you would say about what the school's role is in developing leadership in students?

58. 21. What is one example of a school practice that supports your statement above?

Thank you!

Your completion of this survey is much appreciated. I welcome any questions or comments you have about this survey.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at pangjua.xiong@gmail.com

Respectfully,
Pangjua Xiong

APPENDIX C: LETTER OF INFORMED CONSENT

Letter of Informed Consent for Interview

May 2, 2017

Dear (Participant Name),

Thank you for participating in the online survey. I am contacting you because you were willing to participate further in my research and you were selected based on your responses on the survey. I am completing an education doctorate at Hamline University in St. Paul, MN and I am currently working on my dissertation. My primary research question for my dissertation is *How do elementary principals describe the role of schools in developing leadership in students?* To gather further data, I would like to interview you.

I am requesting your participation in an interview that will help me learn more about the perceptions and experiences you have that will inform my research question. The interview questions are open ended and entirely open for your consideration and response. I will provide the questions in advance if you wish. The interview will be audio-taped and should last 45 - 60 minutes. It will take place at a time and location of your choosing during the month of March.

There is little to no risk involved in participating in the interview. If you agree to be interviewed, your identity will be protected. Neither your name nor identifying characteristics will appear in the transcription or the report. All results will be confidential and anonymous. The transcription of the interview will only be seen by me and the members of my dissertation committee. You may request a copy of the transcription if you desire. You may decide not to participate at any time without negative consequences.

If you need additional information please contact me or the Institutional Review Board at Hamline University.

Sincerely,

Pangjua Xiong
2485 Lake Avenue
White Bear Lake, MN 55110
651-235-1019
pangjua.xiong@gmail.com

Institutional Review Board
Matthew Olson, Chair
mholson@hamline.edu

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview

(Keep this form for your records. Sign and return the form on the following page.)

I have received your letter about participating in an audio-taped qualitative interview as part of your research for completing your dissertation in your doctoral program. I understand that the interview is an opportunity for you to learn more about my perspectives and experiences as related to your research topic. I agree to participate in the interview at a time and place of my choosing. I understand there is little to no risk involved in participating in the interview, that my confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty or consequence.

Participant Signature

Date

Informed Consent to Participate in Qualitative Interview
Please mail or email this form to Pangjua Xiong by May 15, 2017

I, _____, agree to participate in this interview as a part of the dissertation project by Pangjua Xiong.

I have received your letter about participating in an audio-taped qualitative interview as part of your research for completing your dissertation in your doctoral program. I understand that the interview is an opportunity for you to learn more about my perspectives and experiences as related to your research topic. I agree to participate in the interview at a time and place of my choosing. I understand there is little to no risk involved in participating in the interview, that my confidentiality will be protected, and that I may withdraw from the interview at any time without penalty or consequence.

Participant Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: ELITE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions

By Pangjua Xiong

Hamline University, St. Paul, MN

Primary Question: *How do elementary school principals describe the role of schools in the development of leadership in students?*

Secondary Questions: *How do elementary school principals define student leadership? What beliefs do elementary school principals hold about student leadership?, and What school-wide practices are considered representative of student leadership?*

Interview Questions

1. As a principal, describe your role in this school?
2. How would you describe what people might feel or see in this school?
3. How do you define student leadership?
4. What is the school's role in developing student leadership?
5. In your opinion, how does developing leadership in students impact their character development?
6. What leadership skills do you feel are most important for students to learn?
7. Some principals believe that developing leadership in students involves providing opportunities and connecting students to the community, why do you think principals believe this?
8. What are some specific school-wide practices that have supported leadership in students?
9. What is your vision for this school and what drives you towards that vision?

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